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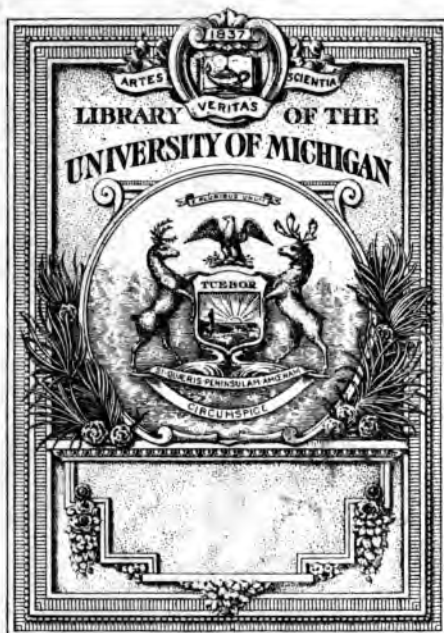
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An Essay on the  
Influence of Welsh Tradition  
upon European Literature.  
With Appendix and Chart.



Mr. Wm. S. Owen Denny

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AN ESSAY  
ON THE  
INFLUENCE OF WELSH TRADITION  
UPON  
EUROPEAN LITERATURE;  
WHICH OBTAINED THE PRIZE PROPOSED  
BY THE  
ABERGAVENNY CYMREIGYDDION SOCIETY,  
OCTOBER, 1838.

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A N E S S A Y  
ON THE  
INFLUENCE OF WELSH TRADITION UPON  
EUROPEAN LITERATURE.

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“ Fiction travels on still lighter wings,” (than science,) “ and scatters the seeds of her wild flowers imperceptibly over the world, until they surprise us by springing up with similarity in regions the most remotely divided.”—*Campbell, Essay on English Poetry.*

IN treating upon the influence of Tradition upon Literature, we should bear in mind that it is only one branch of literature which can be materially affected by tradition. It is the influence which events, supposed to have actually occurred in remote times, have exercised upon the writers who have subsequently either narrated those events, or invented others which they have pretended to narrate, that we are now to consider.

At an early period of social existence, when no written Tradition. chronicles exist, the memory of the most important occurrences can of course only be preserved by oral repetition. The elders of the tribe will describe to their descendants the natural phenomena they have witnessed,



Fiction.

will tell them of their sorrows and their joys, and will speak to a deeply-interested audience of the wanderings and perils, the terrors and the triumphs of their ancestors and of themselves; the propensity of age to exaggerate the occurrences of youth, the love of the marvellous generated and fostered by ignorance, the difficulty of detecting error, and the inaccuracy inseparable from oral communication, will first distort the original story; At length some bolder and more original genius, first daring to invent, will launch forth upon the trackless waters of fiction; timidly indeed at first, and, as it were, coasting along the partially exploded shores, he will but exaggerate the incidents and the characters with which he is already familiar, but soon success will give him confidence, and, relying solely upon his own resources, he will draw fresh and inexhaustible treasures from the boundless realms of imagination. Under such circumstances we must naturally expect to encounter no inconsiderable difficulties in any attempts to distinguish reality from invention; to recognise "the truth severe," even when "by fairy fiction dressed;" or to discover in those elaborate literary compositions, whose first object is to please by skilful deception, the exact proportion which the ore bears to the alloy; the mines from which the ore itself has been drawn; the processes it has undergone, or the degree in which it has been affected by the various substances with which it may have been brought into contact. The richer indeed the metal, the more was it necessarily adulterated; and the more skilful the artificer, the more complete was the fusion.

. . . . . " For still where wit hath found  
A thing most clearly true, it made that fiction's ground."

*Drayton, Polyolbion, Sixth Song.*

But when we confine ourselves to investigating the effects produced upon the literature of fiction, by the traditions of a single tribe or country, this difficulty is materially increased by the very remarkable similarity observable in the early traditional fictions of all nations. "Fiction," it has been elegantly and acutely remarked, "travels on still lighter wings than Science, and scatters the seeds of her wild flowers imperceptibly over the world, until they surprise us by springing up with similarity in regions the most remotely divided."—*Campbell, Essay on English Poetry.*

Similarity  
observable in  
fictions of  
various na-  
tions.

The true reason of this remarkable similarity is to be found in the resemblance which must necessarily exist between the circumstances of different tribes, in a state but little removed from barbarism, and in the common nature of those intellectual appetites, by which, no less than by the physical appetites, the human race is affected. Romantic or mythological tales are the natural and simple food by which the first cravings of imagination are, as it were, appeased; a food which will be easily obtained and greedily devoured, wherever language and fancy exist.\*

This similarity of fictions is not, however, to be confounded with their scarcely less remarkable identity. In a more advanced state of civilisation, when national intercourse is facilitated, and when literary composition becomes an honourable and profitable occupation, it is

Identity of  
fictions of  
different na-  
tions.

\* "Porchè siccome a conservare la mortal vita, diverse vivande da Dio a ciò provveduto ci vengono in uso, non il solo pane, massimamente quando questo non basta; per simil guisa a nudrire i nostri animi delle verità che il naturale e proprio alimento ne sono, abbiamo delle imagine di esse verità altresì bisogno che sono le romanzesche finzioni."—*Quadrio, Storia e Ragione d'ogni Poesia*, vol. iv. p. 324.

scarcely conceivable with what rapidity a story which has become popular in one country, or in one language, is adopted by others; how soon the national renown of a warrior, the local reputation of a magician, or even the more partial fame of a beauty, becomes universal; how completely literature then takes the place of the enchantress, one touch of whose magic wand instantly transports her favourites to the most remote and inaccessible regions.

But if the difficulties to be encountered in such an attempt be considerable, yet, on the other hand, the subject is one of great interest to all persons of literary taste. The daily increasing importance of the literature of fiction, the remarkable influence which it has long exerted, and which it still continues to exert, over the human heart and mind, the long array of genius devoted to its service, and, above all, the probability of its hereafter maintaining, or even elevating, its position with respect to other branches of literature, will stimulate curiosity, encourage exertion, and, perhaps, in some measure, beguile the tediousness of the course we may find it necessary to follow.\*

- \* "The waies through which my weary steppes I guide  
In this delightful land of Faery,  
Are so exceeding spacious and wide,  
And sprinkled with such sweet varietie  
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,  
That I, nigh ravisht with rare thoughts' delight,  
My tedious travell doe forget thereby,  
And when when I 'gin to feeble decay of might  
It strength to me supplies, and cheers my dulled spright."

*Spenser, Faery Queene, book vi. canto i. stanza 1.*

"The mightiest chiefs of British song  
Scorn'd not such legends to prolong;

Hitherto the phrase "literature of fiction" has been used; but if we adopt Scott's definition, we may perhaps substitute for it the single word "romance." "A fictitious narrative in prose or verse, the interest of which turns on marvellous and uncommon incidents."\* With the exception of fable and allegory, (with which we are not at present concerned,) this definition seems sufficiently accurate and comprehensive for our purpose. It should, however, be borne in mind that the word "romance," in its original signification, was not applied to the *style* but to the *language* of the composition.†

Meaning of  
the word  
"Romance."

During the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, everything written in the romance language was called "a romance," and all who wrote in that language on any subject, romance writers.‡ The French, the

They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,  
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme ;

\* \* \* \*

Warm'd by such names, well may we then  
Though dwindled sons of little men,  
Essay to break a feeble lance  
In the fair fields of old romance."

Scott—Marmion, Introduction to canto i.

\*Article "Romance," in the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica.

† In tanto tutto ciò che in dette lingue si scriveva, in prosa o in verso che fosse, o sacro, o profano, o vero, o favoloso, si chiamava Romanzo, perche scritto in lingua Romanza.—*Quadrio*, Storia e Ragione d'ogni Poesia, vol. iv. p. 290.

‡ "Tout ce qu'on écrivit d'abord dans l'un ou l'autre dialecte de cette langue, en prose ou en vers, fut appelé Romant, Romanzo, ou Romance, du nom même de la langue. Ce titre fut ensuite plus particulièrement affecté aux fictions historiques rimées."—*Ginguenté*, Histoire de la Littérature Italienne, part ii. chap. iii.

Spanish, and the Italian were called romance languages, in opposition to the Latin on the one hand, and to the native dialects of the Celtic and Teutonic tribes on the other. As these several languages, however, became gradually more distinct, it seems to have been at first restricted to the dialect spoken in the north of France, (the *langue d'oïl*, in opposition to the *langue d'oc*,) and afterwards, by a somewhat singular transition, to the most popular productions of this language. Thence it gradually acquired the restricted sense in which it is now exclusively used.

Early writers often unconscious of their deviations from truth.

Nor did the earlier authors of those chronicles and narratives, which we are in the habit of considering as pure fictions, and to which we apply this term in its

See also in vol. xii. of the *Archæologia*, p. 54, an excellent dissertation on this subject, by M. de la Rue. He gives some curious illustrations. Richard d'Annebaut, a Norman poet, translated into verse the Institutes of Justinian, which he says he "romanced." Samson de Nanteuil versified the Proverbs of Solomon, and Hélié de Winchester, Cato's Distichs, and both call their works "Romances."

"In its earliest signification, the term Romance was appropriated to the dialects spoken in the different European provinces, that had been subjected to the Roman empire, and of which Latin was the basis, though other materials might enter into the construction."—*Dunlop's History of Fiction*, vol. i. p. 192.

"All is called geste Englis  
That in this language spoken is,  
Frankis speech is called romance  
So sayis clerkis and men of France."

*Robert de Brunne*, (A. D. 1303.)

"Latimer fut si sot parler *Roman*,  
Englois, Gallois, et Breton, et Norman."

*Roman de Garin*, MSS. Bibl. Reg. Paris, 1542 ;  
quoted in Price's edition of Warton's *History of English Poetry*, p. 73.

modern sense, ever suppose that they were outraging probability, or indeed doing anything but simply relating facts. The marvels of which they wrote were strictly in accordance with the received opinions of the times in which they lived; the belief in magic and witchcraft, for instance, even amongst the most highly educated classes, was then unshaken, nor was it eradicated until comparatively a very recent period;\* natural philosophy had made no progress; religion inculcated and exacted a superstitious credulity, and flung the veil of faith over the wildest visions of enthusiasm; the most matter-of-fact travellers, the biographers of the saints themselves, even the naturalists of those days, sanctioned the existence of monsters, and the occurrence of prodigies by no means inferior to those of the romance writers; and the exploits and feats of arms of the first Norman adventurers vied with those of Arthur and his knights.† Scott has indeed beautifully explained the origin of these exaggerations of the romance writers by another theory, which still finds some supporters—that of the physical superiority of our ancestors.

“ The attributes of those high days  
Now only live in minstrel lays;  
For Nature, now exhausted, still  
Was then profuse of good and ill.  
Strength was gigantic, valour high,  
And wisdom soared beyond the sky;  
And beauty had such matchless beam,  
As lights not now a lover’s dream.”

*Scott, Bridal of Triermain, canto i. stanza 19.*

\* Sir Matthew Hale, for instance, believed in witchcraft, and more than once passed sentence of death upon witches.

† See Southey’s Preface to *Morte Arthur*.

It is to be remarked that this has always been a favourite idea with all writers of fiction, and was doubtless founded on well-known facts; it may be sufficient at present to cite one of the earliest and most elegant romance writers, *Marie de France*.

“ Chevaliers trouvoient pucels  
A lor talent gentes é beles,  
E dames trouvoient des amans  
Biaux é curteis, preux é vaillans.”

*Lai d'Yvonec*, line 99.

Earliest  
fictions  
founded on  
history.

The earliest fictitious narratives are always founded on historical materials; the facts, however, are soon distorted and exaggerated, episodes are introduced, the scenery, manners, and motives are altered, until, in some cases, little more than the principal characters and incidents remain unchanged; the favourite warrior of some warlike tribe becomes the centre of a group of imaginary heroes; around him different traditions accumulate, and to him they become subservient; the power of realization, the true poetic talisman, baffles the Cerberus Reason; its possessors guide their followers into the shadowy realms of imagination; there they delight to recognise the familiar shades of the founders of their race, or the champions of their cause, clothed with a vague and mystic grandeur, enjoying a vigorous and perpetual existence, and glittering in all the pomp of an ideal immortality.\*

\* “ Poets, under various denominations of bards, scalds, chroniclers, and so forth, are the first historians of all nations. Their intention is to relate the events they have witnessed, or the traditions that have reached them; and they clothe the relation in rhyme, merely as the means of rendering it more solemn in the narrative, or more easily committed to memory.

Few subjects connected with the history of literature have excited more curiosity, or given rise to more discussion, than the origin of this peculiar style of fiction, which once, and for a considerable period, prevailed almost to the exclusion of every other; and which still continues to exert so great an influence upon the literary productions of our own day. Its earlier course may indeed be traced, and the different channels into which it has been since diverted are still to be discerned; but its original source, like that of the Egyptian river, either hidden in the recesses of a remote and barbarous district, or neglected from its apparent insignificance, seems still to baffle the acute and laborious researches of literary curiosity.

Origin of  
romantic  
fiction.

But as the poetical historian improves in the art of conveying information, the authenticity of his narrative unavoidably declines. He is tempted to dilate and dwell upon the events that are interesting to his imagination, and conscious how indifferent his audience is to the naked truth of his poem, his history gradually becomes a romance."—*Scott*—Preface to the *Bridal of Triermain*.

The historical character of tradition is thus beautifully alluded to by Byron, who, with his characteristic cynicism, extracts from it a bitter moral.

" Ah! such, alas! the hero's amplest fate !:  
When granite moulders, and when records fail,  
A peasant's plaint prolongs his dubious date ;  
Pride! bend thine eye from heaven to thine estate ;  
See how the mighty shrink into a song !  
Can volume, pillar, pile, preserve thee great ?  
Or must thou trust Tradition's simple tongue  
When Flattery sleeps with thee, and History does thee wrong."

*Childe Harold*, canto i. stanza 36.

Those, however, to whom romantic literature is familiar, will probably be of opinion, that "the mighty" rarely, if ever, "*shrink* into a song," and may doubt whether "Tradition's simple tongue" be a better antidote to oblivion than any which history affords.



The inquiry has been somewhat perplexed by imaginary discoveries, and plausible though ill-sustained conjectures, which, as generally happens in such cases, have one by one vanished before the clearer light of subsequent knowledge.

Arabian,  
Scandinavian,  
and  
Classical  
theories.

Three several and distinct sources have, however, been indicated by such high authority, and their respective claims supported with so much learning, and received with so much confidence, that they cannot be passed over entirely without remark. These are the *Arabian*, or Oriental, supported by Warton, in his *History of English Poetry*; the *Scandinavian*, or Northern, by Percy, in the introduction to his *Reliques of Early English Poetry*; and the *Classical*, by Dunlop, in his *History of Fiction*. Each of these writers has, of course, had his followers, and although they seem to have fought a sort of "Welsh main"\* with each other, with a most fatal success, (Warton, who argued against the Scandinavian origin of romance, having been ably refuted by Percy; the objections to both stated by Dunlop, whilst all have been mercilessly attacked by Ritson, in the *Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy*, prefixed to his *Ancient English Metrical Romances*,) it may not be amiss briefly to point out the most obvious grounds which may lead us to doubt the correctness of these popular theories.

Objections to  
the Arabian  
theory.

The principal objection to the Arabian origin of romance is the want of intercourse between the Arabians and those parts of Europe in which romance first appeared,—namely, France and England. In attempting

\* This term is used in the cockpit to signify a general and promiscuous contest between several birds, in which the last survivor is considered the winner.

to point out the existence of any such intercourse, or in tracing its channels or its progress, Warton completely fails, and is, indeed, eventually driven to a somewhat ludicrous absurdity, by his perception of a fact, which did not escape his research, but which he could not reconcile with his theory. "No province or district," says he, "gave these fictions of the Arabians a more easy reception than the inhabitants of Armorica." He does not attempt to assign any reason for this strange instance of literary hospitality, but hurries on at once to explain the manner in which the Armoricans conveyed, as he imagined, these Arabian fictions to their neighbours.

Against the Scandinavian theory, the arguments, though perhaps not quite so strong, are nearly as conclusive. The last objection applies with equal force in this case, and it would seem as if the Sagas, about which so much has been written, are known, in many instances, so far from being the originals, to have been confessedly translations from, or versions of, the French *lais*, romances, or *fabliaux*.\*

Objections to  
the Scandi-  
navian the-  
ory.

Gallantry, again, can hardly be claimed as a Scandinavian accomplishment; and the fair sex amongst the Northmen, eminent for their chastity, could never have furnished models for the easy beauties of the court of Arthur. Their superstitions are of a far more gloomy

\* Thus the *Saga of Ivent England Kappa*, is a translation of the French romance, "Yvain Chevalier au Lion." The *Bretomanna Saga* is a British history. See *Warton's History of English Poetry, Dissertation I*. "Even in those regions, it may be added, the legends of Arthur and of Charlemagne soon supplanted, generally speaking, the old heathen legends."—*Lockhart*, article *Romance*. *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*.

kind than those of romance; instead of the enchanted cup, or magic fountain, they have the skull filled with the blood of the slaughtered foe; whilst the vindictive spirit of the storm, or the weird sisters "choosers of the slain," occupy the places of the mysterious Merlin, or the lovely and enchanting Morgana.

The classical hypothesis is that which certainly appears, at first sight, to be the least objectionable. Hercules and Theseus, Circe and Calypso, are not unlike the knights and heroines of romance in their loves and their enchantments, their wanderings and their feats of arms; many of the subordinate incidents and personages, and much of the "scenery and decorations," would unquestionably suit, nor was there any want of intercourse between the countries, or of familiarity with the classical traditions.

Two peculiarities of the romances irreconcilable with either theory.

Two remarkable features, however, are discernible throughout the whole of the romances of Europe, which appear to militate with equal force against all these theories.

Christianity opposed to Paganism.

In the first place, the heroes are always Christians, and their opponents Pagans. So inflexible, indeed, is this rule, that we may often find a Christian champion selected in preference to the indigenous hero of the tribe or country. Thus we have Charlemagne instead of his northern ancestors; Arthur, and not his Saxon conquerors; the Christian warriors of the Niebelungen lied, in place of the older heathen inhabitants of Germany; Amadis, in preference to the Gothic chiefs of Germany. Secondly, we cannot but remark the elevated social position assigned to the female sex by all the writers of the romantic school. Whilst neither amongst the people of classical

Gallantry.

antiquity, nor amongst the Orientals, are the slightest Gallantry. traces of chivalric gallantry discernible.\* Their women were the slaves of their passions, not the goddesses of their idolatry; they were the objects of desire, not of intellectual respect. It would be superfluous to point out any particular examples of the truth of this position, but it may be remarked, that so conscious were the earlier romance writers of the fact, that they invariably represent the heathen antagonists of their heroes, the giants, monsters, and termagants, as treating the sex with a grossness and even cruelty sedulously contrasted with the gallantry and profound reverence with which the Christian knights delighted to honour them. Both these striking features would seem to fix the birth of romance in a Christian country, and in the midst of a conflict between Christianity and Heathenism.

But the principal objection to these several hypotheses Identity of scene and character.

\* "Love, with the ancient poets, is often tender, sometimes virtuous, but never accompanied by a sense of deference or inferiority. This elevation of the female sex through the voluntary submission of the stronger, though a remarkable fact in the philosophical history of Europe, has not, perhaps, been adequately developed. It did not originate, or at least very partially, in the Teutonic manners from which it has sometimes been derived. The love-songs, again, and romances of Arabia, where others have sought its birthplace, display, no doubt, a good deal of the rapturous adoration which distinguishes the language of later poetry, and have perhaps, in some measure, been the models of the Provençal troubadours; yet this seems rather consonant to the hyperbolical character of Oriental admiration, than to a state of manners where the usual lot of women is seclusion, if not slavery. . . . It appears, on the other hand, fully developed in the sentiments, as well as the usages, of northern France, when we look to the tales of the court of Arthur which Geoffrey of Monmouth gave to the world about 1128."—*Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. i. pp. 176, 178.

appears to me to establish almost conclusively that which I believe to be the most correct; and this is, the identity of personages, localities, and incidents observable throughout all the earlier romances; Arthur, or some of his knights, the ladies of his court, Merlin and Morgana, are invariably the prominent characters; the scene is always either in Wales, Brittany, or Cornwall; and the same story of intrigue, concealed by artful stratagems on the part of the heroine; of the prowess and accomplishments, the disguises and the wanderings of the hero; to say nothing of the identity of the minor incidents,—forms the foundation of them all. Though variously embellished with giants, monsters, and dragons, and the whole machinery of magic, for the gratification of the lovers of the marvellous, with legends and miracles from the lives of the saints to satisfy the credulity of the superstitious, with local traditions to flatter the national pride of different countries, and interspersed with numerous battles and single combats, so perfectly in accordance with the taste of the multitude in warlike times, the general uniformity of their character, scenery, and structure, cannot escape observation, and is, beyond all question, the clearest indication of their true origin. There can be no doubt, that at all events, after the first crusade, the Asiatic traditions, fables, habits, scenery, and natural productions, exercised a very important influence upon the school of European fiction; nor is it less apparent, that on the revival of classical literature, the romance writers found, in the mythology and epic poetry of Greece and Rome, materials of which they soon availed themselves. But in tracing the many contributory streams which subsequently swelled the current, we must not lose sight of

its original source, nor, misled by its obscurity or unimposing appearance, rob it of its parental honours.\* The striking features already enumerated, the personages, localities, and general character of the earlier romances, the gallantry they inculcate towards the sex, the constant warlike conflict between Christianity and Paganism to which they allude, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by the Oriental, classical, or Scandinavian theory. On the other hand, Wales, Britanny, and Cornwall, are the only districts in which the traditions respecting Arthur have yet “a local habitation and a name;” the most intimate connexion once subsisted between these countries—an identity of language still exists; Arthur himself occupies a prominent station in the history of one of them; above all, we have the express and uniform testimony of the earliest romance writers, that these were the countries whence they derived their materials; and we can scarcely come to any other conclusion than that at which some of the most able literary antiquarians of our day, Leyden, George Ellis, Scott, and Southey, have arrived,—namely, that the origin of romance is either Armorican or Welsh.†

Welsh origin  
of romance.

With respect to the ancient connexion between the countries, it cannot fail to be remarked, by even the

Ancient connexion between Wales Cornwall and Britanny.

\* “La véritable histoire littéraire recherche avec autant de soin l’origine et la filiation des inventions poétiques, que l’histoire héraldique en met à recherche de la descendance et la source des titres et des blasons.”—*Ginguéné*, part ii. ch. 5.

† The Bards, the surviving branch of the ancient Druids, claimed and received a sacred homage from their hearers; and to their songs, celebrating the struggles of the Britons against the Saxons, may be referred one principal source of the tide of romantic fiction which overflowed Europe during the middle ages; I mean the tales which, in exaggerating,

most cursory reader of old romances, that when their authors speak of Wales, Cornwall, or Brittany, they evidently consider these countries as the peculiar and hallowed ground of romance and faery; as if hardly aware of the physical obstacles which intervened between them, they lay the scene almost indiscriminately in either, and constantly change it from each of the three countries to one of the other two.\* This is so obvious, that it is scarcely necessary to refer to individual instances. But the fact of this connexion between the countries has much better authority than romance in its favour, and may be considered as clearly ascertained as any similar fact which has ever occurred in history. We learn from Cæsar,† that the Armorican tribes had

have disguised and almost obliterated the true exploits of King Arthur and his followers."—*Scott*. Sir Tristrem, Introduction, p. 26.

So also Drayton,

"O memorable Bards, of unmixt blood, which still  
Posteritie shall praise for your so wondrous skill,  
That in your noble songs the long descents have kept  
Of your great heroes else in Lethe that had slept,  
With theirs whose ignorant pride your labours have disdained,  
How much from time and them how bravelie have you gained."

*Polyolbion*, 6th Song.

\* The poetical geography and chronology of the romancers has been thus happily ridiculed by Butler—

"Some writers make all ladies purblind,  
And knights pursuing in a whirlwind;  
Others make all their knights in fits  
Of jealousy to lose their wits:  
Some force whole regions, in despite  
Of geography, to change their site,  
Make former times shake hands with latter,  
And that which was before come after."

† De B. G., lib. iii. c. 9.

called on the Britons for assistance, and that this was one of his pretences for the invasion of Britain.\* Pliny found a tribe called *Britanni* remaining in Gaul.† The very names of the three countries would be of themselves almost sufficient to establish the fact. A district in Brittany is still called *Cornouaille*. Cornwall itself would seem to be only *Cornu Walliæ*;‡ *Armorica* is clearly *Ar-mor-uch*, literally, “upon the sea heights;” to this day the Welsh call the Bretons “*Cymry Fraingc*,” and the *Brython*, or Breton tribe, was one of the three peaceful tribes of colonists enumerated in the Bardic Triads. M. de la Rue, in his *Recherches sur les Bardes Armoricains*; Borlase, in his *Antiquities of Cornwall*; Père Lobineau, in his *History of Brittany*; and, though last not least, Sharon Turner, in his admirable *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, have all pointed out most clearly the historical evidence of the close connexion which formerly existed between these countries.§ But their common language and common traditions, which neither a political separation of many centuries, nor the entire absence of all literary and commercial communication, have been able to obliterate, are of themselves sufficient to answer all objections. The

\* De B. G., lib. iv. c. 18.

† Hist. Nat., lib. iv. c. 31.

‡ “The truth seems to be, that the country was called by its ancient inhabitants Kernou, or, as the Welsh write it, Cerniw, or the horn, from its projecting promontories; that it was Latinised into Carnubia, or Cornubia; that when the Saxons gave the name of Wealas to the Britons, they distinguished those who had retired into Kernou, or Cornubia, by the name of Corn-Wealas, and their country was then called Cornwall, i.e. Cornish Wales.”—*Lyson’s Magna Britannia*. Cornwall, p. 1. See also *William of Malmesbury de Gest. Reg.*, lib. ii. c. 6.

§ See also *Gibbon*, Decline and Fall, &c., c. 38.



Bretons and the Welsh can even now make themselves, to a certain degree, intelligible to each other;\* and an inspection of the following extracts from a vocabulary at the end of *Hughes' Horæ Britannicæ* will show that the words in question are *identical* in the *three* dialects, whilst, at the same time, they have not the slightest resemblance to their French, Latin, or English synonyms.† Borlase informs us, that traditions of Arthur are yet as common in Cornwall as in Wales; and they certainly are by no means rare in Brittany. For instance, in the

\* Two remarkable instances have come to the author's personal knowledge; the one, that of a Breton emigré in the time of the French Revolution, who conversed with some Welsh women who then frequented the market at Bath. The other, that of a Welsh seaman on board a man-of-war, commanded by the late Sir Christopher Cole, who interpreted between that officer and some Breton fishermen, (who spoke no French,) when he was cruising off the French coast during the war of the French Revolution.

| † <i>Latin.</i> | <i>Welsh.</i> | <i>Cornish.</i> | <i>Armorican.</i> | <i>French.</i> | <i>English.</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Albus.          | Gwynn.        | Gwdn.           | Guen.             | Blanc.         | White.          |
| Aqua.           | Dwr.          | Dour.           | Dur.              | Eau.           | Water.          |
| Avena.          | Ceirch.       | Kerh.           | Kerch.            | Avoine.        | Oats.           |
| Vacca.          | Buwch.        | Byuh.           | Biych.            | Vâche.         | Cow.            |
| Corpus.         | Pen.          | Pedn.           | Pen.              | Corps.         | Body.           |
| Cor.            | Calon.        | Colan.          | Calon.            | Cœur.          | Heart.          |
| Domus.          | Ty            | Tshyi.          | Ti.               | Maison.        | House.          |
| Filius.         | Mab.          | Mab.            | Map.              | Fils.          | Son.            |
| Pes.            | Troed.        | Truyd.          | Troat.            | Pied.          | Foot.           |
| Pater.          | Tâd.          | Tad.            | Tat.              | Père.          | Father.         |
| Ovis.           | Dafad.        | Davas.          | Danvat.           | Brebis.        | Sheep.          |
| Nix.            | Eiry.         | Er.             | Erch.             | Niège.         | Snow.           |
| Niger.          | Du.           | Din.            | Din.              | Noir.          | Black.          |
| Lupus.          | Blaidh.       | Blaidh.         | Bleidl.           | Loup.          | Wolf.           |
| Lapis.          | Maen.         | Mean.           | Men.              | Pierre.        | Stone.          |

Père Lobineau, in his *History of Brittany*, ingeniously points out the Armorican origin of almost all the Gaulish words mentioned in Cæsar.

introduction to Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, there is a quotation from a modern French traveller in Brittany, showing the existence in that country of a tradition identical with that on which is founded Scott's elegant little poem, *The Bridal of Triermain*. "La tradition conserve encore dans ces lieux le souvenir de l'énorme château d'Artus. Des rochers de granite entassés donnent l'idée de ses vastes murailles; on doit y trouver des trésors gardés par des démons."—*Voyage dans le Finistère en 1794 et 1795*. Quoted by Ellis. *Early English Metrical Romances*, Introduction, p. 98, note.

In addition to this mass of evidence, we have, with respect to Brittany, the direct testimony of history that it was colonised by the Welsh under Maximus, a Roman general, and Conan, Lord of Meiriadoc or Denbigh, in the fifth or sixth century.\*

Had Geoffrey of Monmouth lived to translate from the original authorities the history of this emigration, all doubts on the subject would long ago have been at an end.†

Arthur is well known to Welsh history, and to that of no other country. He was the son of Meirig ap Tewdrig, and succeeded his father as chief of the Silures about A. D. 510. In 517 he was elected leader of the confederate British chiefs, and by his valour and good fortune gave a preponderance to the arms of his coun-  
Arthur.

\* About A.D. 513, according to Sharon Turner. See also *D'Argentré, Histoire de Bretagne*; *Lobineau, Histoire de Bretagne*; *Powell's History of Wales*; *Lhuyd's Etymol.* p. 32. Geoffrey of Monmouth; lib. v. c. 12; lib. vii. c. 3; lib. ix. c. 2.

† "Cum librum de exultatione eorum transtulero."—Lib. viii. c. 3.

trymen over those of their Saxon invaders, until about A. D. 540; when, deserted by his nephew Modred, who joined the enemy, he risked the fortunes of his race in the battle of Camblan, which proved fatal to both, and finally secured the supremacy of the Saxons.

I do not think it necessary here to discuss Mr. Owen's ingenious hypothesis of the existence of two personages of this name,\* since even he is convinced of the existence and exploits of the *historical* Arthur.† The minute and undisputed account given by Giraldus, of the discovery of his body at Glastonbury by Henry the Second, in 1189, in the very spot indicated by the Welsh traditions, when there seems to have been no other reason for supposing it to have been buried where it was in fact found, would be alone sufficient to silence all doubts as to his actual existence.

The popular superstition of his being still alive, and about to return and reign again over his confiding subjects, obtained particular favour very early in Brittany,

\* In the Cambrian Biography.

† Even William of Malmesbury knew how to distinguish his history from his romantic character. "Hic est Arturus," says he, "de quo Britonum nugæ hodie delirant, dignius plane quem non fallaces insomniarent fabulæ, sed veraces prædicarent historiæ, quippe qui labantem patriam diu sustinuerit."—Lib. iii. c. 7.

"This is that Arthur," says Hume, "so much celebrated in the songs of Thaliessin, and the other British bards, and whose military achievements have been blended with so many fables, as even to give occasion for entertaining a doubt of his real existence."—*History of England*, c. i.

"But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise ?

Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room ?

And dare her wild flowers mingle with the bays,

That claim a long eternity to bloom

Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb ?"

*Scott, Vision of Don Roderick, St. 61.*

and in no other country except Wales.\* One very remarkable instance of the force of this persuasion is recorded in history. When Henry the Second was about to create his son Geoffrey Duke of Brittany, the Bretons insisted that he should be named Arthur, saying that perhaps he might be the prince whom they expected.† Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, references to this Welsh and Breton superstition are frequent.‡ It soon indeed became proverbial.§

Merlin and Morgana (Mor Gwyn) are clearly of Welsh origin, and both are well known in Brittany.||

Lastly, we have the uniform and explicit testimony not only of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but of the earliest Testimony of  
the early Ro-  
mancers.

\* Alain de l'Isle, in the first half of the twelfth century (cited by *De la Rue*, "Bardes Armoricaïns," p. 19,) says, that any man would be stoned who said in Brittany that Arthur was dead.

† William of Newbury, Lib. iii. c. 7, cited by *De la Rue*, *Bardes Armoricaïns*, p. 50.]

‡ " Quibus si credideris,  
Expectare poteris  
Arturum cum Britonibus."

*Peter of Blois*, Epist. 57.

" Je fais, je crois, tele attente  
Come li Bretons font d'Artur."

*Walter of Soignies*.

" En tele attente m'estuet faire  
Come li Bretons font de leur Roi."

*Rutebœuf*, Lai de Brichemer.

§ The Trouveurs speak of a vain hope as "un espoir Breton."

*De la Rue*, *Bardes Armoricaïns*, p. 51, 52.

|| For instance, Merlin is supposed by the Bretons to be still enclosed in a tree, by the power of a greater enchanter than himself. No one knows the exact spot. See *Southey's* Preface to *Morte Arthur*. In a poem of the thirteenth century, called "*Les privilèges aux Bretons*," certain families are mentioned as being of fairy descent, and amongst them "Jacques Brian de Compalé, cousin de la Fée Morgaine." She is said to have been first mentioned by Geoffrey, in his *Life of Merlin*.

romance writers, and particularly of Robert Wace and Marie, that they derived all their materials from Brittany or Wales. These will be noticed subsequently in their appropriate places, and it will be shown, that from them, particularly from Geoffrey, the literary descent of the greater part of the productions of the earlier romantic school is indisputable.

Such are some of the principal arguments which appear to me to establish almost conclusively the position, that the true origin of romance is to be found in the Welsh traditions; "a baseless fabric," indeed, in Mr. Hallam's opinion, but one, nevertheless, supported not only by the high authorities he himself enumerates, but by two of the most learned and acute literary historians of our day, Sir Walter Scott and Dr. Southey.\*

\* "The authority of Warton, Leyden, Ellis, Turner, and Price, have rendered this hypothesis of early Armorican romance popular; but I cannot believe that so baseless a fabric will endure much longer."—*Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, pp. 47, 48. Note. "Traditional stories," he admits, "they might possess, and some of these may be found in the *Lais de Marie*, but not romances of chivalry." The existence of these "traditional stories" is all that is contended for; from them the romances of chivalry were subsequently formed. I am not aware that any writer on the subject has ever asserted that romances of chivalry in a complete state existed in the Welsh or Armorican language. Since the above note was written, the *Iarlles y Fynnaewn*, or 'Lady of the Fountain,' has been published from the original MS., with an English prose translation, by Lady Charlotte Guest: it affords the strongest confirmation of the Welsh origin of romance, and proves that, notwithstanding Mr. Hallam's opinion, the hypothesis of early Welsh or Armorican romance is anything but a "baseless fabric." It is somewhat singular that it should have been reserved for the literary enterprise, industry, and learning of an English lady, to throw so much light upon a subject hitherto veiled in obscurity; and as this is the first of a series of similar publications by the same authoress, we may expect that still further evidence may soon be brought forward.

Since the publication of Sharon Turner's *Vindication of the Ancient British Poems*, no rational doubt can be entertained of the existence of Welsh poems of a date antecedent to the eighth century. This, at all events, is not the place for discussing that question; and as the soundness of Mr. Turner's arguments has hitherto been unimpeached, I trust I may be excused in assuming his conclusion to be correct: to those literary sceptics who will not bow to such authority, I can only say, in the words of the old romance writer,

“Et si ceo ne volent granter,  
Ne voil vers eus estriver,  
Gardent le leur, et jo le men,  
La raison si prouvera ben.”\*

[*Raoul de Beauvais* (1257).]

It is to be remarked that the principal poem of that remote age, *The Gododin of Aneurin*, is of an historical and descriptive character. It relates to an important occurrence in Welsh history, of which its author was an eye-witness.† This at least shows that the Welsh were even thus early in the habit of recording historical events in verse, and thus transmitting them to succeeding ge-

\* “Those who chose to consider the Welsh poems as spurious, had never examined them. Their groundless and impudent incredulity, however, has been of service to literature, as it occasioned Mr. Turner to write his vindication, which settled the question for ever.”—*Southey*. Notes to *Madoc*.

† A portion of this poem was versified by Gray, (who of course was furnished with an English translation,) and is published amongst his works or “*The Triumphs of Owen, a Fragment*,” beginning

‘Owen’s praise demands my song,  
Owen swift and Owen strong.”‡

nerations.\* With respect to their early historians, Gildas and Nennius, who are supposed to have written about the middle of the ninth century, considerable doubt and obscurity exist. No good copy of Nennius has come down to us, and his work, as it now exists, is nothing but a dry epitome. He gives an outline of the story of Brutus, and of that of Merlin, both of which are so much dwelt upon by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Giddas has by some writers been supposed to be identical with Aneurin, but the genuineness of the work commonly known by this name, has been, in my opinion, most successfully impugned by the Rev. Peter Roberts,† who, in an ingenious dissertation on the subject, suggests that the work which will be subsequently alluded to as having been brought over from Brittany, and which formed the foundation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle, was that which was designated by this name.

Without, however, attributing any importance to the somewhat obscure questions of the genuineness and true date of Gildas and Nennius, but bearing in mind that the British race were from the earliest times in the habit of recording historical events in verse, and that the Armoricans were a British colony, we shall not be surprised when we find, that at a later period Brittany proved the

\* " Besides, the Briton is so naturally infused,  
With the poetic rage, that in their measures art  
Doth rather seem precise than comlie ; in each part  
Their meter most exact, in verse of th' hardest kind,  
And some to riming be so wondrously inclined,  
Those numbers they will hit out of their genuine vaine  
Which many wise and learn'd can hardly ere attaine."

*Drayton, Polyolbion, Sixth Song.*

† " Chronicle of the Kings of England, translated from Tyailio " by the Rev. Peter Roberts.

source from whence Welsh history and tradition, like the fabled streams of the classical mythology, sprang forth, after an obscure subterranean course, with unimpaired purity and vigour.\* That this was really the fact, seems to be established on as good historical evidence as any other literary occurrence of those times; and in order to illustrate and explain the connexion between this sort of second birth of Welsh historical tradition, and the rapid and important effects which it produced upon the literature of Europe, it will be necessary, at the risk of a digression, to give some account of a work which has exercised a far more extensive and permanent influence upon literature than is generally supposed, and which has scarcely received, as yet, the attention which it deserves.

The work to which I allude is the Chronicle of the Kings of England by Geoffrey of Monmouth; *Geoffrey of Monmouth. Galfridus Monemutensis*, as he Latinised his name; who may fairly be considered as the literary parent of the most popular romances of Chivalry. "This enticing tale," says Scott, "soon drew into its vortex whatever remained of British history or tradition; and all the heroes whose memory had been preserved by song, were represented as the associates and champions of the renowned Arthur." *Sir Tristrem*, Introduction, p. 27. "His book," says a writer of the highest authority on these subjects, (Ritson,) has infected or influenced more or

\* "The whole literature of Europe was ultimately inundated by the nursery tales of Wales and Armorica, as it had formerly been by the mythology of Greece and Egypt."—*Ellis*, Introduction to Specimens of early English Poetical Romances.



Geoffrey of less national history in almost every quarter of the globe."\*

Geoffrey, or Galfridus, was a Welsh Benedictine monk, supposed to have been Archdeacon of Monmouth, and subsequently Bishop of St. Asaph, and wrote his Chronicle about 1140, according to the best authorities. His mentioning Robert of Gloucester, natural son of Henry the First, William of Malmesbury, and others, as his contemporaries, and his death being known to have happened in 1154, fix the date of his works within a few years. According to his own account, Walter Calenius, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought from Brittany and presented him with an ancient manuscript in either the Welsh or Breton language, if indeed there was then any difference in the two dialects. This MS. he translated into Latin prose, dividing it into nine books, and subdividing those into chapters. He commences with the history of Brutus, son of Sylvius, and grandson of Ascanius, who, being exiled from Italy in consequence of

\* A writer of the very first authority on literary history (Sismondi) seems, however incredible it may appear, to be entirely ignorant of his existence. I doubt whether he once mentions him in his celebrated *Histoire Littéraire du midi de l'Europe*, and in c. 7 he says, of the story of Arthur, "*la première origine de cette histoire se trouve dans le Roman du Brut du Maître Gasse (Wace) qui porte dans le texte même la date de 1155.*" Wace was a translator of Geoffrey, and, from the authorities previously cited, some estimate may be formed of this popular writer's strange ignorance of this portion of literary history. It would have been scarcely more incorrect to have said that the first origin of the story of Robin Hood was to be found in the *Ivanhoe* of Scott, or the first origin of that of Godfrey de Bouillon in the *Jerusalem Liberata*.—Ginguené has formed a just estimate of the literary importance of Geoffrey's work, although he thought him an inventor. "Quoiqu'il en soit," he says, "ces deux chroniques fabuleuses (Turpin's and Geoffrey's) "sont le fondement de tous les romans de chevalerie."

having accidentally slain his father, takes refuge in Greece; there he obtains the hand of Imogen, daughter of a king of that country, and a fleet, with which he arrives in "Albion," then inhabited by giants, and founds the kingdom of Britain. It continues to give the history of his descendants down to Cadwallader, son of Cadwallon. The history and achievements of Arthur occupy an important place in the work, and to Geoffrey's account of him (although Arthur was a popular hero long before he wrote) almost all the romance writers have been largely indebted. In this respect Geoffrey has been aptly compared to a reservoir in which the waters are collected only to be again distributed to the various purposes of life.\* He also wrote a Life of Merlin in Latin verse, in which he has doubtless collected, and put into a somewhat different shape, the popular legends relating to that famous enchanter, and the no less celebrated fairy Morgana. He contemplated a third work, a Translation of a Welsh account of the Emigration of the Welsh Colony which settled in Armorica, but he probably never completed it; at all events it has not come down to us. Little doubt exists but that Geoffrey derived from the manuscript and from the verbal communications of Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, (to whom he acknowledges his obligations,) little more than the outline of the earlier part of the Chronicle. The speeches

Geoffrey of  
Monmouth.

\* "Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, (of which the modern opinion seems to be that it was not a forgery, but derived from an Armorican original,) and the pseudo-Turpin's Life of Charlemagne, were the grand historical magazines of romance. \* \* \* The stream of fiction having thus spread itself in those grand prose reservoirs, afterwards flowed out from thence again in the shape of verse, with a force renewed by accumulation."—*Campbell's Essay on English Poetry*, p. 29, note.

Geoffrey of  
Monmouth.

and Letters, the minute descriptions of battles and ceremonies, he no doubt composed for himself, after the manner of the most popular of the ancient historians and chroniclers, from Herodotus and Thucydides down to Froissart and Monstrelet.\* It has, indeed, been contended that the whole of the work was a complete forgery—a pure invention of its author. This idea has, however, been proved by Ellis to be completely erroneous, and indeed it could only have had its origin in the absence of all research on the subject. There is now little doubt but that almost every fact and every personage introduced by Geoffrey into his history was, at the time he wrote, familiar to popular tradition.

With respect, for instance, to the story of Arthur and his knights, we know this to have been the case; their characters and exploits were in Geoffrey's time so universally popular, as to have been already much disfigured by the variations and additions of the narrators. He himself expressly asserts this.† A passage in the writings of his friend and contemporary, William of Malmesbury, given a few pages back,‡ sufficiently shows that the distinction

\* "The fidelity of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the execution of his labours, at least his scrupulous exactness in preparing the reader's mind for any important deviations from, or suppression of, his original, has been so satisfactorily established, that we might cite his example as an instance of good faith that would have done honour to a more enlightened age, and shines conspicuously amid the general laxity of his own."—*Price's edition of Warton's History of English Poetry*, Preface, p. 99.

† "Cum et gesta Arturi et sociorum, a multis populis quasi inscripta mentibus, et jucunde et memoriter prædicentur."—*Præfat. Hist. Brit.* See also a short but masterly summary of the History of Arthur, and the effect of Geoffrey's work, in *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, c. 38.

‡ P. 20, note.

between the historical and his popular character of Arthur <sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth.</sup> was even then understood. Alan de l'Isle, or De Insulis, who wrote in 1109, (quoted by Sharon Turner in his "*Vindication*," ) says of him, perhaps indeed with some exaggeration, "He is even more known in Asia Minor than in Britain; Rome sings his actions; Antioch, Armenia, Palestine, sing his deeds." The Lives of the Saints, written before Geoffrey's time, allude to him.\* In the earliest French romance writer, Robert Wace, A. D. 1155, we have an additional proof of the universal popularity of his story.† With respect then to Arthur, the futility of the notion that Geoffrey invented what were already the most popular fictions of the day, is sufficiently clear; and there is little doubt but that a great part of his chronicle was merely a compilation of similar materials, aided by the old Welsh manuscripts

\* Sir John Price, the cotemporary and friend of Leland, says, (Hist. Brit. Defensio, edit. 1573, p. 127,) "In vitâ S. Dubritii luculenta fit mentio de eodem Arturo et de rebus ab eo gestis, ad eundem fere modum quo in Historia a Gaufrido translata memorantur; quam quidem vitam longè ante Gaufridi tempora in Ecclesia Landavensi die Divi Dubritii memoriæ dedicato quotannis ab ipsius ecclesiæ cultoribus, repetitam fuisse liquet."

† "En cele grant pais que je dis  
Furent les merveilles provées  
Et les aventures trovées  
Qui d'Artur sont tant racontées,  
Qui a fables sont atornées;  
Ni tot falor, ni tot savoir,  
Tant ont li conteors conté  
Et li fableors tant fablé  
Por lor contes embeleter  
Que tot ont fait fables sembler."

Cited by De la Rue, *Bardes Armoricains*, p. 34.

Geoffrey of  
Monmouth.

to which he had access.\* The true reason of the extraordinary literary effect it produced, is probably to be found in the language in which it was written, which, by rendering these Traditions accessible to the whole of Europe, rescued them from the comparative obscurity in which they had long previously existed, and thus provided an ample store, of which the popular writers by whom Geoffrey was succeeded, were not slow to avail themselves. But it was not these earlier authors alone who profited by his labours; much of Drayton's *Polyolbion*, Sackville's *Ferrex and Porrex*, Shakspeare's *King Lear*, to say nothing of the works of the Romance School in England, France, and Spain, were drawn from the same inexhaustible mine; and had Milton ever executed a work he had at one time in contemplation, by making the Chronicle the foundation of an epic poem,† our obligations to Geoffrey of Monmouth would never have been doubted.

\* Every further investigation of the subject only tends to support the opinion pronounced by Mr. Douce, that the tales of Arthur and his Knights, which have appeared in so many forms, and under the various titles of the St. Graal (sang réal,) Tristan de Leonnois, Lancelot du Lac, &c., were not immediately borrowed from the work of Geoffrey, but from his Armoric originals."—*Price's Warton*, Preface, p. 99.

† " Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per æquora puppes  
Dicam, et Pandrasidos regnum vetus Imogeniæ,  
Brennumque, Arviragumque duces, priscumque Belinum,  
Et tandem Armoricos Britonum sub lege colonos;  
Tum gravidum Arturo fatali fraude Iogernem,  
Mendaces vultus, assumtaque Gorlois arma,  
Merlini dolus," &c.

*Epitaphium Damonis*, verse 161.

" Siquando indigenos revocabo in carmina reges  
Arturumque etiam sub terras bella moventem ;

Having thus clearly shown that the work of Geoffrey <sup>Earliest ro-</sup> was a compilation of the Welsh and Armorican tradi-  
 tions of his day, let us inquire how far the earliest  
 romance writers profited by his labours, and let us see  
 with how much candour they confess their obligations to  
 the same source.

Almost all the writers of authority on this subject  
 agree in attributing the earliest romance which has come  
 down to us, to Robert Wace, (or *Gasse*, as he has been  
 sometimes called,) who wrote about the year 1155.\*  
 Recent investigations, however, seem to establish the  
 fact, that Gaimar's abridgment of an older French <sup>Gaimar.</sup> romance, "Havelok the Dane," must have been written  
 a few years earlier.† Gaimar mentions his having bor-

Aut dicam invictæ sociali fœdere mensæ  
 Magnanimos heroas ; et O ! modo spiritus adsit,  
 Frangam Saxonicos Britonum sub marte phalanges."

*Mansus*, verse 80.

Pope contemplated an epic poem on the same subject. See Warton's  
 Essay on his Genius and Writings, vol. i. p. 289. Dryden once enter-  
 tained the same idea, a circumstance thus alluded to by Scott :

" And Dryden in immortal strain  
 Had raised the table round again,  
 But that a ribald king and court  
 Bade him toil on to make them sport."

*Marmion*, Introduction to chap. i.

And see the note on this passage.

\* The "Chanson de Roland," sung by Taillefer, a Norman minstrel,  
 in front of William's army as it advanced to the attack at Hastings,  
 cannot be considered a romance.

† The following is a specimen of Gaimar ; it clearly shows that "Bre-  
 taigne" was used to signify Wales, or rather Britain, by the earliest  
 romance writers.

" Si funt escoz, e les Pictes  
 Li Gawaleis et li Combries ; (Cumbrians;)

Earliest ro-  
ances.

rowed a book from Robert Earl of Gloucester, who died in 1138. There seems no reason to doubt that this was either Geoffrey's work (which must in that case have been written a few years earlier than is usually supposed,) or (which M. De la Rue thinks probable) the manuscript of Walter Calenius, by which Geoffrey profited so largely. However this may be, Gaimar says expressly of the story,

"Que un lai en firent li Breton."

Wace.

Robert Wace was a native of Jersey, and educated at Caen in Normandy.\* He wrote, about the year 1115, a "*Brut d'Angleterre*," so frequently referred to by all

Tel quere funt la gent estrange  
En grant dolur entra Bretaigne.  
Li Angleis tuz iurs<sup>1</sup> acreissent,  
Car de ultre mer souvent venaient  
Cil de Seissoigne (Gascoigne) et de Alemaigne  
S'ainstent<sup>2</sup> a lur compaignie;  
Purdan<sup>3</sup> Hengist, lur successeur,  
Les altres firent d'els seigneur.  
Tuz iurs si com il conqueraent,  
Des Engleis la reconissaient.  
Este vu ci un acheson,<sup>4</sup>  
Par quel Bretaigne perdi son nun,  
Et les nevoz Artur regnerent  
Li encontres Engleis<sup>5</sup> guerierent."<sup>6</sup>

*Gaimar's Havelok*, by Madden, p. 150.

\* He says himself,

"En l'isle de Gersui fui nez  
A Chaem (Caen) fui petiz portez,  
Illoques fui a letres mis  
Puis fui longues en France apria."

<sup>1</sup> Toujours.

<sup>2</sup> S'ajoutent.

<sup>3</sup> Pourtant.

<sup>4</sup> Accident?

<sup>5</sup> The "Angles" or Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>6</sup> Firent la guerre.

the writers on the subject of the origin of Romance. It is, in fact, a translation or paraphrase in French verse of Geoffrey's work; to obviate any doubts on the subject, a specimen is given in the Appendix. He was the author of many other celebrated romances; amongst them the "*Roman du Rou*," and the "*Roman du Chevalier au Lion*;" the latter is commonly, but erroneously, attributed to Chrétien de Troyes, who put it into prose. He also composed a history of the Norman Invasion of England. A most accurate account of his various literary productions is given by M. De la Rue, in the *Archæologia*, vol. xii. p. 50.\*

\* It would not fall within the limits of this Essay to give a catalogue of the French romance writers, or to trace the many instances in which they availed themselves of the traditions of Wales and Brittany; one of them, however, must not be passed over in silence. Marie, a French lady, wrote several popular and elegant romances in that language before A.D. 1226. Arthur and his Knights are constantly her heroes; the scene is always Wales or Brittany. In the *Lai de Lanval*, Arthur causes Lanval to be tried at Cardiff, and when he is on the point of being unjustly condemned, a fairy transports him to the Isle of Avalon. She acknowledges the sources from whence she derived her subjects.

" Les contes que jeo sais verrais (vrais)  
Dunt li Bretun ont fait les lais  
Vus conterai asez briefment."

And again,

" Les auciens Bretons curteis  
Firent le lai pur remembrer.

The *Lai d'Éliðus* begins thus,

" De un mult ancien Lai Bretun  
Le cunte et tute la reisine  
Vus dirai si cum jeo entent."

The *Lai de Laustic* commences with,

" Une aventure vus dirai  
Dunt li Bretun firent un lai."



Earliest romances.  
Layamon.

The oldest English romance is generally admitted to be the work of Layamon, a priest of Ernlye upon Severn, who wrote, between 1150 and 1200, a translation of Robert Wace's "*Brut d'Angleterre*," itself, as we have seen, a paraphrase of Geoffrey's work. A specimen is given in the Appendix. He was followed by Robert of Gloucester, who wrote a "Chronicle of England" in rhyme, and is all but a translator of Geoffrey. He is commonly said to have written about 1278; but it could not have been earlier than 1297, since he speaks of the canonization of St. Louis.

Robert of Gloucester.

Robert de Brunne.

Robert de Brunne was another translator of Geoffrey, or rather of Wace's "*Brut d'Angleterre*," about 1308. His real name seems to have been Robert Mannyng, a Gilbertine monk in the monastery of Bourne in Lincolnshire. Specimens of these writers are given in the Appendix.

To give even a cursory account of the ancient romances, ballads, lays, contes, and fabliaux, which are founded upon the stories of Arthur and his knights, as related by Geoffrey and his various translators, would far

And her expressions at the beginning of the *Lai de l'Espine* are still more decisive.

" Qui que des lais tigne a mensonge  
Saciés je ne tiens pas a songe;  
Les aventures trepassés  
Que diversement ai conteis  
N'es ai pas dit sans garant;  
Les estores en tres avant  
Ki encore sont a Karlion,  
Ens le monstier (monastère) Saint Aaron  
Et en Bretagne sont seues  
Et en plusors lius conneues."

exceed the limits of this essay, nor would it very materially illustrate the influence which, through such channels, the British traditions still continued to exercise upon the literature of those times; it may be sufficient to show by a few instances how largely the great writers of the middle ages, both in England and Italy, drew from the same inexhaustible source, and it will thus be evident that the lighter and more ephemeral productions were no less indebted to it for a large portion of their more transitory reputation.

First in order we must speak of Chaucer, whose true Chaucer. poetic genius, fertile wit, learning, and refinement, so far exceeded the literary standard of his age and country, that he has been, not unhappily, compared to one of those brilliant and unclouded days which occasionally enliven the fickle and inclement spring of the English climate.\*

That this extraordinary and accomplished person was not merely thoroughly conversant with the cotemporary literature of Italy, (having been personally acquainted with Petrarch and Boccacio,) but was deeply read in the French romantic literature, to which such frequent allusions have been made,† is sufficiently apparent from

\* Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales* about 1382. He was born in 1328, but his allusion to "Jack Straw" in the *Nonne's Preeste's Tale* shows that he could not have written it until 1381.

† He was, for instance, so familiar with the works of Marie as to have almost literally translated some passages from her *Lais*, besides taking from thence the plot or idea of at least one of his tales. The lines quoted above,

"Del aventure de ces trains  
Li auncien Bretun curteis  
Firent le lai pur remembrer;"

Chaucer. many passages in the *Canterbury Tales*; nor did he make any scruple of frequently alluding to the sources from whence he drew his materials.—In the *Wife of Bath's Tale* we are told that,

“ In the old dayes of King Arthur,  
(Of which the Britons speken great honour,)  
All was this lond fulfilled of fayry.”

The “*Frankleine's Tale*” is confessedly taken from a Breton Lay: the “*Frankleine*” himself begins,

“ In Armorike that called is Bretagne  
There was a knight.”

The *Nonne's Preeste's Tale* is taken from Marie, although much embellished and enlarged. The original “*Lay*” is given at full length by Tyrwhitt, in his edition of Chaucer.

The “*Man of Lawe's Tale*” is commonly supposed to have been taken by Chaucer from the “*Confessio Amantis*” of his cotemporary and friend Gower. Tyrwhitt, however, found the same story in a more ancient romance in the Cottonian MSS., under the name of “*Emaré*,” the author of which says of it,

“ This is on of Brytayne lays  
That was used by olde dayes.”

Spenser. No English poet, however, has been so largely indebted to the British romantic traditions as Spenser.

are nearly paraphrased in the *Frankleine's Tale*.

“ These olde gentil Bretons in her dayes  
Of divers adventures maden lays,  
Rimeyd in hir first Breton tongue,  
Which lays with hir instruments they songe,  
Or else redden him for hir plesaunce.”

He did not, indeed, like Chaucer, draw his supplies from Spenser. the fountain head, the simple and unadorned Lays of "the olde gentil Britons." The literary taste of his time had become to a certain extent vitiated ; a peculiar learning always verging on, and not unfrequently degenerating into pedantry, had begun to exert its pernicious influence even in the regions of fiction. He had studied his predecessors of the Italian school ; above all, he had the minute and somewhat prolix details of perhaps the most popular work of his day, the *Morte Arthur*,\* to

\* "*The Lyf of Kyng Arthur, of the noble Knyghtes of the Round Table, and in th' ende the dolorous deth of them all*," was a compilation from all the most popular romances of the British school, probably written in French originally, and translated by Sir Thomas Mallory into English prose, first printed by Caxton in 1485.

Its literary reputation and popularity are thus quaintly and severely alluded to by Roger Ascham, in his "*Schoolemaster*," written about 1563. "In our forefather's time, when papistrie, as a standing poole, covered and overflowed all England, few books were red in our toong savyng certayne bookes of chivalrie, as they sayd for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in monasteries by idle monkes or wanton chanons ; as one for example, *Morte Arthur*, the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open manslaughter and bolde bawdrie ; in which booke those be counted the noblest knights that doe kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest adulteries by sutlest shifts." . . . . . "This is good stuffe for wise men to laughe at, or honest men to take pleasure at. Yet I know when God's Bible was banished the court, and *Morte Arthur* receaved into the prince's chamber. What toyes the dayly reading of such a booke may worke in the will of a young ientleman or a young maide, that liveth wealthily and idly, wise men can iudge, and honest men doe pittie." The beautiful story of Paolo and Francesca, *Dante, Inferno*, c. 5, is a curious illustration of the truth of the last remark :

"Noi leggiavamo un giorno, per diletto

Di Lancilotto, come amor lo strinse," &c.

Byron's exquisite translation of this passage will probably recur to the reader's recollection.

Spenser. consult, and in his hands, as a natural consequence, fable was refined into allegory. He declares himself that

“Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall *moralize* his song.”

“The idea of allegorical beings performing acts of chivalry fell in with the taste of an age that affected abstruse learning, romantic valour, and high-flown gallantry. Prince Arthur was brought from ancient ballads and romances, to be allegorized into the Knight of Magnanimity at the court of Gloriana. His knights followed him thither in the same moralized garb.”—*Mrs. Montague. Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare.\**

The adventures, however, of the individual knights, as well as the structure of the “Faery Quene,” are exact imitations of the old romances of the British school, and in several particular instances Spenser has closely followed the British traditions. Thus, in b. vi. canto 1, st. 13, 15, “The mantle made of the beards of kings” is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth.† The brazen wall which Merlin intended to erect near Carmarthen in b. iii. canto 3. st. 9, and his being interrupted in the execution of the design by the enchantments of the Lady of the Lake, who buried him alive, are clearly of British origin, Giraldus Cambrensis having in all probability first made the story generally known.‡ Again, in b. ii. canto 10. st. 1, the chronicle of British Sovereigns is taken entirely from Geoffrey, as also Merlin’s prophecy, b. iii. canto 3. st. 20.

\* See also some excellent remarks on this subject in *Warton’s History of English Poetry*, Sec. 43.

† Orig. et Gest. Reg. Brit. b. x. 13.

‡ Girald. Cambrensis. Itin. Cambr. i. c. vi.; Hollingshed, i. 129.

The Italian poets followed the chronicle of the sup-<sup>Italian Poets.</sup> posed Turpin, and made the heroes of the court and camp of Charlemagne their subjects. We shall presently allude to the probability of the Welsh traditions having been the source from whence this numerous class of romances was originally derived. But although Arthur and the knights of his round table did not in Italy, as in France, occupy the most prominent positions in the works of the most popular writers of the middle ages, a careful investigation will show that they nevertheless profited largely by the British traditional history, and that not a few of their personages and incidents are of pure Cambrian descent. For instance, in the "*Orlando Innamorato*" of Boiardo,\* better known from the later<sup>Boiardo.</sup> version of Berni, the foundation on which Ariosto's immortal work was afterwards constructed, Arthur, Merlin, Morgana, Tristrem, and others of their companions, are constantly alluded to, and introduced—Morgana as an enchantress, who has a subaqueous palace. In lib. i. canto 1. st. 39, will be found an Italian version of the Welsh story of the ring of Eluned, which endowed its wearer with the power of making himself invisible at pleasure. Again we find the story of the magic potion of Sir Tristrem, elegantly embellished, (which has been copied

\* "The *Orlando Innamorato* has hitherto not received that share of renown which seems to be its due; overpowered by the splendour of Ariosto's poem, and almost set aside in its original form by the improved edition or *rifacimento*, which Berni afterwards gave, it has rarely been sought or quoted even in Italy."—*Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries*, i. 313. An excellent edition of it has been lately published by Professor Panizzi, of the British Museum.

with so much success by Ariosto and Spenser,) in lib. 1. canto iii. st. 32, 33, 37.

" Dove nel mezzo vide una fontana  
Non fabbricata mai per arte umana.

• • • • •

Merlin fu quel che l'ebbe edificata  
Perchè Tristano il cavalier ardito  
Bevendo a quello lasci la regina  
Che fu cagion al fin di sua ruina.

• • • • •

Questa fontana avea cotal natura  
Che chiascun cavaliere innamorato  
Bevendo a quella amor di sé cacciava  
Avendo in odio quella ch'egli amava."

Ariosto. Ariosto, the greatest master of the romantic school, would certainly seem to have borrowed less from British tradition, in any direct way, than his predecessors. His story is a continuation of that of the Orlando Innamorato, and consequently the characters and incidents are rather derived from the heroes and beauties of the court of Charlemagne, than from those of the court of Arthur. It would appear, however, that the name of the hero, Roland, or Orlando, is of British origin.\* Morgana is alluded to, as well as Merlin, whose cave is mentioned, and the story of his being enchanted by the Lady of the Lake is given in *Orlando Furioso*, canto 3, st. 10. (vide p. 49.) The fiction of "the fountains of love and hate," so justly admired, and said to have been founded on the magic potion of *Sir Tristrem*, and consequently of British origin, will be found in canto 1, st. 78.

" E questo hanno causato due fontane  
Che di diverso effetto hanno liquore ;

\* Davies's Mythology, or Rites of the Druids, p. 447.

Ambo in Ardenne e non sono lontane ;  
 D'amoroso disio l'una empie il core ;  
 Chi bea dell'altra senza amor rimane,  
 E volge tutto in ghiaccio il primo ardore ;  
 Rinaldo gusto d'una, e amor lo strugge,  
 Angelica dell'altra, e l'odia e fugge."\*

Ariosto.

Ariosto has probably been the favourite poet of the modern world. Above sixty editions of the *Orlando Furioso* were published in the sixteenth century ; and even in our time this greatest of the romancers fully maintains his station, uneclipsed by the supernatural and mystic sublimity of Dante, or by the majestic harmony and admirably selected subject of Tasso's epic.

Having thus attempted to trace in these great masters of poetic fiction the influence which the British traditions exercised over the literature of the middle ages, we may proceed to point out the remarkable popularity of one or two of the principal personages on whom British story has conferred immortality, as the companions of Arthur's exploits, and almost his rivals in renown.

The principal of these is undoubtedly *Sir Tristrem*; *Sir Tristrem*, of whom Scott, in a letter to the Rev. R. Polwhele, gives the following account :—" Tristrem, (of whose real existence I cannot persuade myself to doubt) was nephew to Mark, King of Cornwall. He is said to have slain in

\* Thus alluded to by Spenser, *Faery Queene*, book iv. canto iii. stanza 45.

" Much more of force and of more gracious poure  
 Is this, than that same water of Ardenne,  
 The which Rinaldo drunk in happy houre,  
 Described by that famous Tuscan penne." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ariosto.



*Sir Tristrem.* single combat Morough of Ireland, and by his success in that duel to have delivered Cornwall from a tribute which that kingdom paid to Angus King of Leinster. Tristrem was desperately wounded by the Irish warrior's poisoned sword, and was obliged to go to Dublin to be cured in the country where the venom had been con-fected. Ysonde, or Ysende, daughter of Angus, accom-plished his cure, but had nearly put him to death on discovering that he was the person who had slain her uncle. Tristrem returned to Cornwall, and spoke so highly of the beautiful Ysonde, that Mark sent him to demand her in marriage. This was a perilous adventure for Sir Tristrem, but by conquering a dragon, or, as other authorities bear, by assisting King Angus in battle, his embassy became successful, and Ysonde was delivered into his hands to be conveyed into Cornwall. But the Queen of Ireland had given an attendant damsel a philtre, or aphrodisiac, to be presented to Mark and Ysonde on their wedding night. Unfortu-nately, the young couple, whilst at sea, drank this beverage without being aware of its effects. The result was the intrigue between Tristrem and Ysonde, which was very famous in the middle ages. The romance is occupied in describing the artifices of the lovers to escape the observation of Mark; the counterplots of the courtiers, jealous of Tristrem's favour; and the uxorious credulity of the King of Cornwall, who is always im-posed upon, and always fluctuating between doubt and confidence. At length he banishes Tristrem from his court, who retires to Britanny, where he marries another Ysonde, daughter of the Duke of that British settlement. From a vivid recollection of his first attachment, he

neglects his bride, and returning to Cornwall in various disguises, renews his intrigue with the wife of his uncle. At length, while in Brittany, he is engaged in a perilous adventure, in which he receives an arrow in his old wound. No one can cure the gangrene but the Queen of Cornwall, and Tristrem despatches a messenger, entreating her to come to his relief. The confidante of his passion is directed, if his embassy be successful, to hoist a white sail upon his return. Ysonde of Brittany, the wife of Tristrem, overhears these instructions, and on the return of the vessel with her rival on board, fired with jealousy, tells her husband that the sails are black. Tristrem, concluding himself abandoned by Ysonde of Cornwall, throws himself back and dies. Meantime the queen lands, and hastens to the succour of her lover; finding him dead, she throws herself on the body, and dies also."

Such is the outline of the earliest English romance of *Sir Tristrem*, by Thomas of Erceldoune, (called "the Rhymer,") and first published by Scott from the original MSS. Thomas the Rhymer was born in 1219, and died before 1299.\* And "we know," says Scott, "that the History of Sir Tristrem, first versified by Thomas the Rhymer of Erceldoune, was derived from *Welsh traditions*."† The early popularity of the story in France and Germany is strikingly indicative of the literary influence then exercised by Welsh traditional stories. From the authority last referred to, we find that a German romance of Sir Tristrem was written by

\* The MS. published by Scott was written about A.D. 1330.

† Article *Romanes*. Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. See also the Introduction to "Sir Tristrem."

Sir Tristrem. Gottfried of Strasburgh, who quotes Thomas of Britannia. Gottfried is supposed to have flourished about 1232. In France he would appear to have been popular at even an earlier period; Chrétien de Troyes alludes to him.\* *Tristan de Leonnys*, in French prose, is said by De Tressan to have been written in 1190; but this is in all probability too early a date. It is, however, well known that a king of Navarre wrote about 1226, and he alludes to the story as quite familiar to his readers.† Marie, also, who has been already spoken of as a romance writer of the beginning of the thirteenth century, speaks of it as a story she had frequently heard and read.‡ Raoul de Beauvais, about 1257, alludes to the many different versions of the story then existing.§ Incredible as it may now appear, the British traditions penetrated even into *Iceland*; and this very story was

\* “Ainques du buivrage ne bui  
Dont Tristan fut empoisoné.”

† “De mon penser, aim mieux la compaignie  
Q’uncques Tristan ne fit Yseul s’aimer.”

‡ “Plusurs me le unt conté et dit  
E jeo l’ai trové en escrit,  
De Tristan et de la Reine,  
De lur amor qui tant fu fine,  
Dunt i eurent mainte dour.”

*Lai de Chèvrefeuil.*

§ “Ici diverse la matyere  
Entre ceus qui solent cunter  
E de le cunte Tristan parler,  
Ils en cuntent diversement  
Oi en ai de plusur gent.”

All these passages are quoted in the Introduction to “Sir Tristrem” and Appendix, by Scott.

translated, in the thirteenth century, into Icelandic.\* In <sup>Sir Tristrem.</sup> no country was it more popular than in Germany—at least three different romances on the subject having been written there. The love of Tristrem and Ysonde soon became proverbial amongst the French troubadours.† Perhaps, however, the most curious proof of Sir Tristrem's early renown yet remains to be noticed. In 1399, an ancient tomb of a Lombard king was broken open, and on the hilt of the sword were these lines—

“Cel est l'épée de Meser Trystant  
Qui occist l'Amoroyt d'Yrlant.”

L'Amoroyt is clearly a French corruption of Morroyt, or Murrough, of Ireland.‡ Amongst the great masters of

\* “Tristrammi et Isoddæ historia, per Robertum Monachum in linguam Islandicam translata, jussu Haquini Norvegiæ Regis.” Alluded to in the following work—*Halfdani, Einaris filii, Sciagraphia Historiæ Islandicæ*. Havniæ, 1777-8. See an account of the German romances on the story of “Sir Tristrem,” by Mr. Henry Webber, in Scott's *Introduction to Sir Tristrem*.

† “C'onques Tristrans Yseult la blonde  
Ne nule femme de cest monde  
N'ama oncques si fort nuleie  
Come ele fist tantôt celui.”

*La Vieille Truande.*

“Tristans tant com fu en c'est monde  
N'ama autant Ysonde la blonde.”

*La dame qui aveine demandait.*

*Barbusan. Fabliaux.*

‡ See *Scriptores Italici*, vol. xii. p. 1028. Galvanei de la Flamina, de rebus gestis Azonis Vicecomitis. “A latere erat unus ensis, habens dentem satis magnam in acie, qui fuerat Tristantis de Lyonos, cum quo interfecerat Lamoranth Durlanth, unde in pomo ensis sic erat scriptum ;

‘Cel est l'épée de Meser Trystant  
Qui occist l'amoroyt d'Yrlant.’”

*Warton's History of English Poetry*, Dissertation I.

And see the Notes to “Sir Tristrem,” by Scott.

Sir Tristrem, Italian poetry the story was as popular as we might naturally expect it to be; \* and the reader may remember, in the *Orlando Furioso*, canto xxxii. "La Rocca di Tristano," where none but the bravest knights and fairest ladies were allowed to remain. Dante also, in the *Inferno*, alludes to him.

"Vedi Paris, Tristano," &c.

"Sir Tristrem" appeared in French prose in print, at Rouen, in 1489, and other versions at Paris, in 1522 and 1532; in Spanish, at Seville, in 1528; at Venice, in Italian, in 1552 and 1555. Of its British origin, were there no other proofs, the names of the personages would be a sufficient indication—Morgan, Urgan (or Urien,) Brengwin, Ganhardin, Merlin. According to British history, Trystan was the son of Tallwch, a celebrated chieftain of the sixth century. He was reckoned as one of the "three faithful lovers," in the Triads of the Bards, on account of his love for Essylt, the wife of March Meirchion, his uncle.

Merlin.

*Merlin*, the enchanter, is a personage of scarcely inferior importance to Arthur himself, in the works of the early romancers. The learned Selden, in a note to Drayton's *Polyolbion*, fourth song, thus speaks of him. "Two Merlins have our stories; one of Scotland, commonly called Sylvester, or Caledonius, living under

\* See *Orlando Innamorato*, lib. i. canto 12, stanza 3; and again, lib. ii. canto 7. stanza 2.

"Che saran sempre in terra nominati  
Tristano e Isotta da la bionda trezza."

Arthur; the other Ambrosius, borne of a nunne, daughter to the King of South Wales, in Caermardhin, (not naming the place, for rather in British his name is Merdhin; but the place, which in Ptolemy is Maridunum, naming him,) begotten, as the vulgar say, by an incubus.\* For his buriall (in supposition as uncertaine as his birth, actions, and all of those too fabulously mixed stories) and his Lady of the Lake, it is, by liberty of profession, laide in France by that Italian Ariosto, which perhaps is as credible as some more of his attributes, seeing no perswading authority in any of them rectifies the uncertainty." It is not a little curious to find, that in the fifth song of the Polyolbion and the notes, both Drayton and Selden think it necessary to explain distinctly that they do not themselves believe the vulgar stories of his exploits. This strongly illustrates the firm hold which the heroes of British story long maintained upon the popular imagination. The wall of brass which he intended to have built near Carmarthen, had he not been interrupted by the enchantments of the Lady of the Lake, is mentioned by Giraldus,† who probably first made it generally known. Merlin was himself the subject of a popular romance, and he occupies a prominent

\* "Celleci avoit appris toutcequ'elle savoit de nygromancie de Merlin le prophète aux Anglais, qui sait toute la sapience qui des diables peut descendre. Or fut le dit Merlin ung homme engendré en femme par ung diable, et fut appelé l'enfant sans père."—*Lancelot du Lac*, (before A.D. 1200,) quoted by *Sismondi de la Littérature du midi de l'Europe*, chap. 7.

† Itin. Cambr. i. c. 6. "Caermardhin ubi Merlinus inventus fuerat, a quo et nomen accepit."—Powell's Edition, p. 184. Cambr. Descrip., lib. i. chap. 5.

Merlin.

position in the poems of Drayton, Spenser, and Ariosto, to say nothing of almost every one of the French romances, and the *Morte Arthur*. He is also well known in Brittany. Spenser follows Giraldus closely, and places his cave at Maridunum, "that is by change of name Carmardhin called"—Caer-Merdhin. He gives a highly poetic description of the place, which is confirmed by Camden, and of the horrid sounds which issue from it, and he relates the fate of the magical architect:

" In the meantime, by that false lady's train,  
He was surprised, and buried under bere."

*Faery Quene*, book iii. canto 3.

The *Morte Arthur* says on the subject, "And so upon a time it happened that Merlin shewed to her in a rocke, where was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, which went under a stone; so by her craft and working she made Merlin go under that stone, to let her wit of the marvailles there. But she wrought so for him that he never came out for all the craft that he could doe; and so she departed and left Merlyn."—Book iv. chapter i. The fair enchantress is here called the Fairy Viviane, under which name she is also known in Brittany, though the exact place of Merlin's entombment is uncertain. In Wales, Merlin's seat, cave, and grove, are still to be seen near a small village called Abergwilly, two miles from Carmarthen, "viewed even now with awe by the peasantry," according to Howell, in his "*Cambrian Superstitions*." This is the spot so beautifully described by Spenser. There is a minute

description of his cave in the *Orlando Furioso*, canto ii. Merlin.  
stanza 70, beginning

“ Ecco nel sasso trovo una caverna  
Che si profonda più di trenta braccia,  
Tagliato a picchi ed a scopelli il sasso  
Scende giù al dritto ed ha una porta al basso.”

So in canto iii. stanza 10, the story of his buriall is  
most correctly given ;

“ Questa e l'antica e memorabil grotta  
Ch' edificò Merlino il savio mago,  
Che forse ricordare odi tal hotta,  
Dove ingannollo la Donna del lago ;  
Il sepolcro è qui giù, dove corotta  
Di soddisfare a lei che gliel suase  
Giace la carne sua, dove egli vago  
Vivo corcosi e morto ci rimase.”

In the *Orlando Innamorato*, as in almost every other romance, he is the magician “ *in ordinary*,” and constructs the enchanted castles and fountains. In the Welsh traditions, one of the Merlins is said to have been the magical architect of Stone Henge.\* To collect all the passages in which he is alluded to, or even to enumerate his feats, would exceed the limits of this essay ; but one of his enterprises is so remarkable that it cannot be omitted. According to the Welsh traditions, he made a house of glass, in which he went to sea, accompanied by the nine Cylveirdd bards, and disappeared. This voyage, that of Gavran to discover the Gwerddonau

\* Called by the Welsh “ Gwaith Emrys.” He is also known as Merddin Emrys, the Bard of Emrys Wledig—the Ambrosius of the Latin historians.



\* . . . . . "In his crystal ark  
 Whither sailed Merlin with his band of bards,  
 Old Merlin, master of the mystic lore?  
 Belike his crystal ark, instinct with life,  
 Obedient to the mighty master, reached  
 The land of the departed, there belike  
 They in the clime of immortality,  
 Themselves immortal, drink the gales of bliss  
 Which o'er Falthinnis breathe eternal spring.

In Roberts's *Cambrian Popular Antiquities*, p. 76, there is a list of the thirteen curiosities which, according to tradition, Merlin took with him in his glass boat; amongst them are the following, probably the originals of

is elegant and witty, considering the period at which it <sup>Merlin.</sup> was written. A king constructs a diving-house of glass—

“ Unas faciamas les gentes retraer,  
*No yas en escrito*, e es grave de creer,  
 Si es verdad o non, yo non he y que veer,  
 Pero non lo quiero en olvido poner.  
 Dicen que per saber que facen los pescados,  
 Como viven los chicos entre los mas granados,  
*Fizo cuba de vidrio* con puntos ben cerrados,  
 Metios en ella dentro, con dos de sus criados.”

He, however, finds all the iniquities of the world above very prevalent amongst the fishes—

“ Viò que los maiores comien a los menores,  
 Los chicos a los grandes tenienos por señores,” &c.

But his loving subjects, alarmed for his safety, draw him up before the expiration of the fifteen days he had intended to stop.

The fairy *Morgana*, Morgwyn, The Fata Morgana <sup>Morgana.</sup> of Sicilian superstition, is scarcely less celebrated than Merlin himself. Of her origin, her name is a sufficient

those which in so many different shapes are to be met with in almost every page of the romances of Europe.

LLEN ARTHUR—The veil of Arthur, which rendered the wearer invisible.

CORN BRANGALED—Which furnished any liquor desired.

CADAIR MORGAN MWYNFOWE—Which would carry a person wherever he desired.

DYSGYL GREN RHYDDERCH—On which any meat required would appear.

TAWLBWRD—A chess-board of gold, with silver pieces, which would play chess of themselves.

MADRWY ELUNED—The ring of Eluned; whoever put it on the finger became invisible at pleasure.

proof\* To enumerate her various feats would be impossible. She is constantly introduced into almost every romantic poem of the middle ages. She was more particularly celebrated for her penchant for gallant knights, whom she by her enchantments inveigled, and kept in an inglorious slumber or thralldom for an indefinite period. Thus, in the famous romance of *Ogier le Danois*, written about the end of the thirteenth century, he is received by Morgana in the Castle of Avalon, introduced to Arthur, and presented with a crown which confers perpetual youth, but also intoxicates him with love for the enchantress, with whom he spends two hundred years unconsciously†. In the *Morte Arthur*, "Quene Morgan le Fay" is said to have been Arthur's sister. She performs a prominent part in the *Orlando Innamorato*, where Orlando's adventures in her sub-aqueous dominions may be seen fully detailed, book ii. cantos 8 and 9.

Having thus traced through their literary career some of the principal personages in Welsh tradition, we will give one or two examples of singular incidents derived from the same source, and re-appearing in an infinite variety of shapes at periods widely remote. These instances might be greatly multiplied, but two or three of

\* Geoffrey mentions her in his "Vita Merlini;" he calls her Morgen, and speaks of her having conveyed Arthur to the Isle of Avalon to cure him of his wounds.

† See *Ogier le Danois*, cited by Sismondi. *Littérature du midi de l'Europe*, c. 7. "Lors (Morgue) s'approcha de Ogier, et lui donna ung anneau qui pourtoit telle vertu que Ogier, qui estoit environ de l'age de cent ans, le retourna en l'age de trente ans, et si le mena par la main au château d'Avalon, là ou estoit le Roy Artus et son frère."

the most remarkable will perhaps sufficiently illustrate this branch of the subject.

The fiction of Arthur, after being wounded in the battle of Camblan,\* having been conveyed by an Elf Disappearance of Arthur. Queen to the Isle of Avalon, whence he will one day return, is one originally and purely Welsh.

According to Sharon Turner, it is common in the songs of the bards, though not of the most ancient bards, who probably lived too near the time of his actual existence, to venture to invest him with any fictitious immortality. Many instances have already been given (page 21) of the prevalence of this fiction in Brittany, and of its extreme popularity during the earlier ages of romantic literature. Geoffrey of Monmouth alludes to the story very cursorily, and just in the style in which an historian would naturally allude to one of the popular stories of his time.† In the “Chronicle” of the Kings of England, (*Brut Tysilio*), translated by the Rev. Peter Roberts, p. 172, his death is thus mentioned: “In this battle Arthur received a wound which proved mortal, and he came to the Isle of Afallach to have it taken care of: this is all that is said here of Arthur’s death.” Gervase of Tilbury wrote his *Otia Imperialia* in the early part of the thirteenth century. The following passage is quoted at p. 242 of Mr. Roberts, who thinks Gervase had never seen Geoffrey’s work, which however is very doubtful.

\* Camblan is supposed to have been situated near Camelford. Leland says that on what has supposed to have been the field of battle, various rings, fragments of armour, &c. had been found.—*Lyson’s Magna Britania*, Cornwall, p. 11.

† Sed inclytus Arthurus letaliter vulneratus est, atque illinc ad sananda vulnera in insulam Avallonis advectus.—*Galf. Monum.* Lib. vii. (ad finem.)

Disappear-  
ance of  
Arthur.

“Arcturus vulneratur ; omnibus hostibus ab ipso peremptis, inde secundum *vulgarem Britonum traditionem* in insulam Avalloniam ipsum dicunt translatum, ut vulnera quotannis recrudescencia subinterpolatâ sanatione, curarentur a Morganda fatatâ, quem fabulosè Britones post data tempora credunt rediturum in regnum.”\*

It is not a little curious to observe how closely this “vulgar tradition of the Britons” is followed in the *Morte Arthur*, published more than two hundred years after Gervase of Tilbury. The description has all the naïve and minute simplicity of that most popular romance. See b. xxi. c. vi. vii. Arthur is placed in a boat full of “many faire ladyes,” who “wept and shryched that hit was pyte to here,” and he tells his faithful comrade Sir Bedwere, that he “would into the vale of Avylyon to hele him of his greene wounde.” “Thus of Arthur,” (says the compiler,) “I finde never more wryten in books that ben auctorysed, nor more of the veray certente of his death I never redde, but thus he was ledde awaye in a shippe wherein were three quenes, that one was Kyng Arthur’s sister, Quene Morgan le Fay, the other was the Quene of North Galys, the thirde was the Quene of the Waste Londes . . . . . Yet somme men

\* “He is a king y crowned in fairie,  
With scepter and sword ; and with his regalty  
Shall resort as Lord and Sovereigne  
Out of fairie, and reigne in Britaine,  
And repair again the old round table ;  
By prophecy Merlin set the date.”

*Lydgate*, Fall of Princes, b. 8. c. 25.

We have already seen, at page 52, that in *Ogier le Danois* he is supposed to be detained in another state by the enchantments of Morgana.

say in many partyes of England, that Kyng Arthur is not dedd.”\*

The humorous and popular fiction commonly known as the story of the “Boy and Mantle,” which has been more often introduced into romances and ballads, and presented under a greater variety of circumstances than perhaps any other fiction of British origin, may serve for another illustration of the influence of Welsh fiction upon literature.

The Boy and  
the Mantle.

The idea is that of a magic horn, from which no warrior could drink, whose wife was unchaste. Sometimes it is the frail beauties themselves who are exposed to the risk of wearing a magic garment, which will only fit the chaste; sometimes a girdle, chaplet, or garland, is the test; but the scene is always laid before the whole court, and the original version of the story, a magic horn brought by a page to the court of King Arthur, is to be found in an old Breton Lay, called the “Lai du Corn,” and in the British romance, “Sir Tristrem.”†

\* So in the old ballad of “*King Arthur's Death*,” in Percy's Reliques ;

“Unto what place he colde not tell,  
For never after he did him spye ;  
But he sawe a barge goe from the lande,  
And hee heard ladyes howle and cry ;

“And whether the king were there or not  
Hee never knewe, nor ever colde,  
For from that sad and direfulle day  
Hee never more was seene on molde.”

† According to some letters of the learned Welsh antiquary, Lhuyd, preserved in the Ashmolean MS., and cited by Wharton in his *History of English Poetry*, Dissertation l. notes. It is also found in many MS., Welsh Chronicles. See also *Dunlop's History of Fiction*, vol. i. p. 275.

The Boy and  
the Mantle.

It is thus introduced into the *Orlando Furioso*, c. xliii.

St. 28.

“ Qual gia per fare accorto ill suo fratello  
Del falla di Ginevra fe Morgana ;  
Chi la moglie ha pudica bee conquello ;  
Ma non vi può gia ber chi l'ha puttana  
Che'l vin quando lo crede in bocca porre  
Tutto si sparge, e fuor nel petto scorre.”

The circumstance of its invention being here ascribed to Morgana, in order to inform her brother (Arthur) of the infidelity of his Queen Guenever, clearly points out the place of its literary birth. It is also alluded to in c. xlii. st. 103.\* The “Girdle of Florimel” in the *Faery Quene* is probably familiar to the reader.† It will be found constantly introduced in almost all the romances. In “*Perceforest*” it is a rose, and in “*Amadis de Gaule*” a chaplet, blooming or fading as the wearer is frail or honest. It is familiar to the French as “*La Coupe enchantée*,” in the witty but licentious “*Contes*” of La

\* “ Se bei con questo, vedrai grande effetto  
Che se porti il cimier di cornovaglia  
Il vin ti spargerai tutto sul petto  
Ne gocciola sarà che in bocca saglia.  
Ma s'hai moglie fedel, tu berrai netto ;  
Or di veder tua sorte ti travaglia.  
Cosi dicendo per mirar tien gli occhi  
Che in seno il vin Rinaldo si trabocchi.”

† See *Faery Quene*, b. v. c. iii. st. 28 ; and b. iv. c. v. st. 3.

“ That girdle gave the virtue of chaste love  
And wivehood true to all that did it beare,  
But whatsoever contrarie doth prove  
Might not the same about her middle weare,  
But it would loose or else asunder teare.”

Fontaine. Not only, however, is the version of the fiction which alludes to the magic horn, of British origin, but it is stated by a very competent authority,\* that some old Welsh MSS. say that Tegan Earfron, one of King Arthur's mistresses, possessed a mantle that would not fit any immodest woman, and that this mantle was reckoned by the bards amongst the curiosities of Britain.

The Boy and  
the Mantle.

The following is the story in *Morte Arthur*.—"By the way they met with a knight that was sent from Morgan le Faye to King Arthur, and this knight had a faire horn all garnished with golde; and the horn had such a virtue, that there might no ladie or gentlewoman drink of that horne, but if she were false shee should spill all the drinke." It is to be remarked that in some instances it is the husband, and in others the wife, on whom the experiment is tried. "The Boy and the Mantle" in Percy's *Reliques* is an excellent ballad, and combines almost all the different versions of the story.†

\* The Rev. Evan Evans in his "*Specimens of Welsh Poetry*," and see the note to *The Boy and the Mantle* in Percy's *Reliques*.

† The test of the horn is thus described :

"The little boy had a horne  
Of red golde that ronge;  
He said there was no cuckolde  
Shall drink of my horne  
But he shold it shedde,  
Either behinde or beforne.

"Some shedde on their shoulder  
And some on their knee,  
He that cold not hitt his mouth  
Put it in his eye,  
And he that was a cuckolde]  
Every man might him see."



King Ry-  
ence's Chal-  
lenge.

Another strange fiction of British origin is peculiar, as far as I can ascertain, to English romance; that of the Mantle made of the beards of kings. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, b. x. c. 13, we find Ritho, a giant, living at St. Michael's Mount; his strong-hold is conquered by Arthur, who takes from him a certain coat, which he had composed of the beards of kings he had slain; he had been courteous enough to keep a corner vacant for Arthur's beard. Drayton, in the fourth song of the Polyolbion, thus alludes to this story;

"And how great Rithout's self he slew in his repair,  
And ravish'd Howel's niece, young Helene the fair,  
And for a trophie brought the giant's coat away  
Made of the beards of kings."

So also Spenser, Faery Quene, b. vi. c. iii. st. 15.

"His name is Crudor, who through high disdaine,  
And proud despight of his self-pleasing mynd,  
Refused hath to yeald her love againe  
Untill a mantle she for him do find  
With berds of knights and locks of ladies lin'd."

Morte Arthur, b. i. c. 24, says, with its usual delightful minuteness and style of perfect faith, "Came a messenger, saying that King Ryence had discomfited and overcomen eleven knights, and everiche of them did him homage, and that was this; they gave him their beards cleane flayne, as much as there was; wherefore the messenger came for Arthur's beard; for King Ryence had purfeled a mantell with *Kings' beards*, and there lacked for one place of the mantell, wherefore he sent for his berd, or else hee would enter into his lands and brenn and slay, and never leave till he have the head and beard." The same story was long popular in England in the

shape of a ballad, called "King Ryence's Challenge," <sup>King Ryence's challenge.</sup> given in Percy's Reliques. Enderbie, in his "*Cambria Triumphans*," p. 197, says he had a copy from Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who got it from one Dr. Johnson of Worcester, who took it from a manuscript of Lord Windsor. It begins with the words,

"As it fell out upon a Pentecost day."

This was the ballad sung to Queen Elizabeth on her arrival at Kenilworth Castle; as appears from the letter of "Master Robert Laneham," from which Scott took his account of the pageant, and I presume, in gratitude, introduced the writer into his novel of "Kenilworth." Master Laneham says, "A minstrell came forth with a solemn song, warranted for story out of King Arthur's acts, the first book, 24, (Morte Arthur,) whereof I gat a copy, and that is this,

"So it fell out on a Pentecost day."

The following is an extract—a page is introduced to Arthur, who is feasting with his court; the page

"Said, King Arthur, God thee ; save and see  
 Sir Reines of North Galys greeteth well thee,  
 And bids thee anon thy beard thou him send  
 Else from thy jaws he will it off rend ;  
 For his robe of state is a rich scarlet mantle  
 With eleven knights' beards bordered about,  
 And there is room left yet in a kantle  
 For thine to stand to make the twelfth out."

Having thus endeavoured to show that

. . . "Whate'er resounds  
 In fable or romance of Uther's son,  
 Begirt with British and Armoric knights,"

is of purely Welsh origin, both by the avowal of the

King Ry-  
ence's chal-  
lenge.

early romance writers, and by the identity of personages, and of incidents, it remains for us to glance for a moment at the origin of the two great systems of romance, by which Arthur and his knights at one period ran some risk of being eclipsed—those of the supposed Turpin and of Amadis de Gaule.

Turpin.

The title of the supposed Turpin's work, which proved so prolific a mine for the French and Italian romancers, is, "*Historia Turpini Archiepiscopi Rhemensis de Vitâ Caroli Magni et Rolandi.*" It was certainly written before 1122, as it is mentioned in a Bull of Pope Calixtus II., dated in that year. The name of the real author is unknown; but it is known not to have been the composition of Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims. It seems to have preceded Geoffrey's History by about twenty years; but it has been already shown that Geoffrey was only a compiler, and that he collected traditions, and translated from manuscripts, of a far earlier period; and when we remember the intimate acquaintance with the Breton lays, which the early Norman romancers displayed, and the early and widely-extended popularity of Arthur and his knights, we may be pardoned for suspecting that the author of the History of Charlemagne and Roland may have profited largely by the Welsh traditions, which, as we have already shown, were almost universally known long before his work was composed. The ideas of Charlemagne and his twelve knights, the "douzepairs," his round table, the adventures of the individual knights, and their being the champions of the cause of Christianity against paganism, seem taken from the Welsh traditions. Such seems to have been the general opinion in the time of Ariosto

who, in the Orlando Furioso, canto iv. stanza 53, speaks Turpin.  
of the

. . . "Cavalieri e della nuova  
E della vecchia tavola famosi."

Such is the decided opinion of Professor Panizzi, who, in his "Essay on the Romantic Poetry of the Italians," prefixed to his edition of the Orlando Innamorato, says expressly, page 34, "That all the chivalrous fictions, since spread through Europe, appear to have had their birth in Wales."\*

With respect to Amadis de Gaule, the proofs of its <sup>Amadis de Gaule.</sup> Welsh extraction are nearly conclusive. It is a prose romance, which first appeared in Spain, where it obtained great celebrity. It was written by Vasco de Lobeira, a Portuguese, who is supposed to have died in 1403, and seems to have been first printed at Seville in 1526. The French writers on the subject say that it was first written in French, not later than the time of Philip Augustus. Bernardo Tasso, author of the "Amadigi," a poem taken from the romance, and who

\* It should be borne in mind, that although the work of the supposed Turpin was written before Geoffrey's, the literary popularity of the latter seems to have preceded that of the former. The romances on the subject of Arthur and his Knights are anterior to those relating to Charlemagne and the Douzepairs by many years, and the natural consequence of this state of things was, that the romances of the later Round Table (Charlemagne's) are full of allusions to persons and incidents properly belonging to those of the older Round Table. Guinguené says, "Il parait certain que même en France, les Romans de la Table Ronde eurent cours avant ceux des douze pairs." Again, "Il parait certain que le succès poétique de cette dernière fable (celle d'Artus) avait précédé de plus d'un siècle, même en France, celui de l'autre." Leyden also, in his preliminary Dissertation to "*The Complaynt of Scotland*," page 263, gives it as his opinion, that all the romances of Charlemagne were of British origin.

Amadis de  
Gaulc.

lived at no great distance of time from its author, says in his Letters, vol. ii. letter 166, "Non e dubbio che lo scrittore l'ha in parte cavata di qualche historia di *Bretagna*, e poi abbelitola;" and again, vol. ii. letter 93, "*Gaula*, in *lingua Inglese*, della quale e cavata quest' Istoria, vuol dir Francia;"\* but he says that the "refabricator" of the story thought that Gaul meant Wales. He himself, under the idea that it meant France, called his poem "*Amadigi di Francia*." I cannot set this question at rest more effectually than by quoting the words of Professor Panizzi, at page 391 of his "Essay on the Romantic Poetry of the Italians," already alluded to. "But setting aside the dreams of Bernardo Tasso, the internal evidence of the *Amadis* proves that it is of Welsh origin, and that *Gaula* means *Wales*. The wars which are alluded to in this romance are those which raged so long between England and Wales. All its heroes are connected with England, Scotland, or Ireland. In the *Amadis*, the Romans and Saxons who are united with the English against the Prince of *Gaula*, are presented under the blackest colours, and the Saxons particularly as traitors, according to the custom of British romancers. The *Gaula* of the romance is a very small country, and no French province or city, not even Paris, is ever mentioned; whilst not only England, Scotland, Cornwall, Ireland, Anglesey, but Windsor (*Vindelisora*,) Bristol (*Bristola*,) and Gravesend (*Gravesenda*,) often occur in it." This was the expiring effort of the Chivalric School of Romance, which received its

\* "I say Gallia and Gaul—French and Welsh."

*Merry Wives of Windsor*, act iii. scene 1.

deathblow from the keen and brilliant wit of Cervantes Amadis de Gaule. in his inimitable "Don Quixote de la Mancha."

To inquire into the causes of the success of this delightful work, of the important influence it has exercised over literature, or of its effect in hastening the decline of the chivalro-romantic style of fictitious composition, would be foreign to our subject; probably it contributed to that result in a less degree than has often been supposed. The invention of printing, the discovery of America, the Reformation, and the fierce religious and political struggles by which it was followed; the revival of classical taste, and the restoration of the drama to its legitimate station, all contributed to produce that result; but the chord so brilliantly struck by the old romancers has not even yet ceased to vibrate,\* and it is not a little singular that its expiring tones should have called into existence the two most universally popular works of modern fiction—Don Quixote itself, and the Pilgrims' Progress. The Pilgrims' Progress. The latter, which captivates alike the rude and the refined, the savage and the civilised, which in recent times, translated into various languages,† seems likely to enjoy a success in other countries only exceeded by that which it has long enjoyed in our own, is

\* "Who shall these lingering notes redeem  
Decaying on oblivion's stream?  
Such notes as form the Breton tongue,  
Marie translated, Blondel sung?"

*Marmion.* Introduction to canto v.

† It is a universal favourite in Wales, its Welsh translation being constantly one of the three or four volumes of the farmer's or cottager's library. It has also been translated into several oriental languages by missionaries, and with the happiest results.

**The Pilgrims' Progress.** indeed composed exactly on the model of the ancient romances of chivalry. The *Pilgrims' Progress* is an allegory, it is true; so is the *Faery Quene*, and so are many parts of the *Orlando Furioso*; but it is in conception and structure a sacred romance; the difficulties encountered and overcome, the exploits and the sufferings of the principal personages, the enemies by whom they are opposed,—in short, the whole work, in its exoteric or literal sense, is as purely romantic as the *Morte d'Arthur* itself, which there can be no doubt Bunyan had studied “con amore,” and it is in a great measure to its romantic character that its universal popularity is attributable. It would not fall within the limits of this Essay to show how largely the spirit of the ancient romances enters into and influences the fictitious compositions of the present day.

**Scott.**

The historical romances of the great magician of the North form of themselves a mine far too rich for us here to explore; before their witchery the physical magic of Merlin and Morgana sinks into insignificance, and the mirror which showed to its favoured possessor the transactions of the remotest times, and of the most distant regions, is placed at once in the hands of every reader of the works of the author of “*Waverley*.” A few productions, in general remarkable for their success, have occasionally shown the variety of poetical subjects with which Welsh tradition abounds.\* “*The Bridal of Triermain*,” for instance, is of pure Welsh extraction, and probably

\* Thus fulfilling Merlin's prophetic declarations in the *Faery Quene*, book iii. canto iii. stanza 43.

“Yet during this, their most obscuritie  
Their beames shall oft breake forth, that men them faire may see.”

the most complete and elegant modern imitation of a romance ever composed in our language. Southey's "Madoc," less known than it deserves to be, filled as it is with charming descriptions and the most highly poetic thoughts and language, speaks for itself to all who are even slightly familiar with British tradition; whilst Gray's "Bard," and Mason's "Druid's War Song," (in "Caractacus,") have never been surpassed, in their peculiar style, in any living language.

And here it is necessary to conclude. The writer is Conclusion. conscious of the many faults and deficiencies which even the most favourable criticism cannot fail to detect, both in the materials and arrangement of this Essay. Should it, however, succeed in directing attention to sources of information on the subject comparatively little known; in briefly adverting to topics which will amply admit of being treated with far superior learning, and at much greater length; should it even have recalled to the recollection of the reader, in juxtaposition with each other, incidents and allusions with which, in an unconnected form, he may have been previously familiar, it will not have been written in vain.

A smile from a favourite beauty, a few words of careless praise from an illiterate noble, the rude applauses of turbulent swordsmen, or the amusement of a party of way-worn travellers, were too often, in the olden time, the only "guerdon" of many of those masterpieces of fiction to which reference has been so repeatedly made in the foregoing pages; the pleasure derived from their perusal would of itself amply reward the writer for any labour he may have bestowed upon his task; but the hope, however faint, of being honoured by the favourable



decision of judges selected for their impartiality, could alone have stimulated him “to enter the lists against all comers,” and thus

“ Essay to break a feeble lance  
In the fair field of old Romance.”

## APPENDIX.

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## APPENDIX.

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THE description of the sports at King Arthur's coronation, from the "Brut Tysilio," or Chronicle of the Kings of Britain, translated by the Rev. Peter Roberts.

"After the banquet the company went out of the town to see a variety of games, and more especially the exercise with the lance; and whatever were the game devised, the walls were crowded with female spectators, each of whom recommended her favourite to notice, which caused the men to exert their abilities to the utmost. Prizes for the victors were also given by the sovereign at his own expense."

The same from Geoffrey of Monmouth, lib. vii. cap. 4, ad finem; (folio lxxvii. Edit. Paris, 1508.) "*Refectæ tandem epulis diversi diversos ludos composituri campos extra civitatem ad-eunt. Mox milites simulacrum prælii ciendo, equestrem ludum componunt; mulieres in edito murorum aspicientes in curiales amoris flammas more joci, irritant; alii telis, alii hastâ, alii ponderosorum lapidum jactu, alii saxis, alii aleis cæter-*

orumque jocorum diversitate contendentes, quod diei restabat, postpositâ lite, prætereunt. Quicumque vero ludi sui victoriam adeptus erat, ab Arturo largis muneribus ditabatur."

*Robert Wace*, A. D. 1155. Vide *Havelok the Dane*, by Sir F. Madden. Notes, p. 200, citing MS. reg. 18, A. xxi. (in Mus. Brit.)

" A plusurs juis se departirent  
Lis uns allerent buhurder,  
Et lurs ignels chevaux mustrer  
Li altre allerent eskermir  
Y pere (pierre) geter y saillir  
Tels i-aveit ki darz lanconent  
E tels i-aveit ki lutouent (luttoient)  
Chescon del gru (q ? jeu) s'entremetaït  
Dunt entremettere se saveit."

*Layamon* (the oldest English romance writer) from *Ellis's Specimens of the Early English Poets*, p. 71. Between A. D. 1150, and A. D. 1200.

" Summe heo gunnen<sup>1</sup> æruen<sup>2</sup>  
Summe heo gunnen urnen<sup>3</sup>  
Summe heo gunnen lepen  
Summe heo gunnen sceoten<sup>4</sup>  
Summe heo wræstleden  
And wither-gomme makeden<sup>5</sup>  
Summe heo on velde  
Pleouweden under scelde<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Begun.

<sup>2</sup> To shoot arrows.

<sup>3</sup> To run.

<sup>4</sup> Shoot darts.

<sup>5</sup> Made wither-games (i. e. games of emulation.)

<sup>6</sup> Played on field under shield,—fought with swords.

Summe heo driven balles  
 Wide ðeond the feldes  
 Moin ane kunnes gomen  
 Ther heo gunnen drinen<sup>1</sup>  
 And wha swa michte iwenne  
 Wurthschipe of his gomene<sup>2</sup>  
 Hine me ladde midde songe  
 At foren than leod kinge<sup>3</sup>  
 And the King for his gomene  
 gaf him ðeven gode  
 Alle the quene<sup>4</sup>  
 The icumen weoren there  
 And alle the lafdies  
 Leoneden ðeond walles." <sup>5</sup>

*Robert of Gloster.* A.D. 1297. (from Ritson.)

" The knights atyled<sup>6</sup> him about in each side  
 In fields and in meads to prove ther bachelry<sup>7</sup>  
 Some with lance, some with sword without villany<sup>8</sup>  
 With playing at tables, other at chekeres,<sup>9</sup>  
 With casting,<sup>10</sup> other with setting, other in some oggyrt <sup>11</sup>  
 manere,

<sup>1</sup> Many a kind of game here gan they urge; *dringen*, Dutch, to urge, or drive.

<sup>2</sup> By his gaming.

<sup>3</sup> Him they led with song before the people's King.

<sup>4</sup> Queens.

<sup>5</sup> Leaned over the walls.

<sup>6</sup> Prepared, armed, attired. Fr. "atteler."

<sup>7</sup> Knighthood.

<sup>8</sup> Meanness.

<sup>9</sup> Chequers, chess, or drafts.

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps throwing or pitching the bar.

<sup>11</sup> Other.

And which so of any game had the mastery  
 The King have of his giftes did large curtesy;  
 Up the alurs <sup>1</sup> of the castle the ladies then stood,  
 And beheld this noble game, and which knights were good."

The same from the *Roman du Chevalier au Lion*, commonly ascribed to Chretien de Troyes; really *Robert Wace's*; from *Ellis's Specimens of the Early English Poets*, vol. i. p. 49.  
 (Copied from MSS. in Mus. Brit.)

" Li uns disoient contes et fables,  
 Auquant<sup>2</sup> demandoient dez et tablez.  
 Tielx joient au hasart;  
 C'estoit un gieu de male part.  
 As (aux) echiez joient plusors  
 Ou a la mine au gieu majors;  
 Dui et dui<sup>3</sup> au gieu s'escompaignent  
 Li uns perdent, li autres gaignent;  
 Cil enjuent qui plus getent,  
 As autres dient qu'ils y metent.  
 Sor gages emprestent deniers,  
 Unze por douze volontiers.  
 Sovent jurent, sovent affichent  
 Gages prennent, gages plenissent,  
 Mult estrivent, mult se courroucent,  
 Sovent mescontent, sovent grotent."

The same (apparently translated from the last) by *Robert de Brunne*, A.D. 1303, from Madden's *Havelok*, notes, p. 204;  
 copied from MSS.

"Dysours ynowe told them fables;  
 And somme pleide wyth des and tables,

<sup>1</sup> "Allures."—Fr. walks on the roof.

<sup>2</sup> Auquns.

<sup>3</sup> Deux et deux.

And somme pleide at hasard fast,  
 And lost and wonne with chaunce of cast ;  
 Somme, that wolde nought of the tabler  
 Drawe forth meyne for the chekkere."

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*A List of some of the earliest printed prose Romances on  
 BRITISH SUBJECTS ; most of which are now very scarce.*

The Byrth, Lyfe, and Actes of King Arthur ; of the noble Knyghtes of the Round Table, theyr marvellous enquestes and adventures ; th' achyevyng of the Sang Real, and in the end the Morte d'Arthur, with the dolorous deth and the departyng out of thys worlde of them al, whiche boke was reduced to the Englysshe by Syr Thomas Malory knight, and by me (W. Caxton), devyded into 21 bookes chaptlyred and emprynted, and fynished in th' Abbey Westmestre the last day of July, the yere of our Lord 1485. (Morte Arthur).

The Hystory of the moost nooble valyaunt Knyght, Arthur of Lyttell Brytayne, translated out of Frenche into Englyshe (by Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, black letter. No date, probably about 1520.)

The Story of the most noble and worthy King Arthur ; the which was the fyrst of the worthyes Christen, and also of his noble and valyaunt Knyghts of the Round Table. (No date, probably about 1590.)

The True Legend of famous King Arthur, the last of the nine worthies, being the first essay of a new British poet, collected out of diverse authentical records, by Robert Chester, 1601, (published in the same volume as his " Love's Martyr, or Rosalin's Complaint.")



The Ancient Order, Society, and unitie laudable of Prince Arthure and his Knightly Armory of the Round Table. 1583.

A Lytel Treatyse of the Byrth and Prophecye of Merlin. Lond. 1510. (Wynkyn de Worde.)

The Life of Merlin, surnamed Ambrosius, his prophecies and predictions interpreted, and the truth made good by our English Annals. 1641.

Merlin's Life and Prophecies. 1658.

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#### FOREIGN EDITIONS.

Histoire du Roy Artus et des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde. Rouen, 1488.

Les Grandes Chroniques de Bretagne, depuis le Roy Brutus jusque a Cadvaladrus dernier Roy Breton. Caen, 1518.

L'Antica Cronica della Gran Bretagna, nella quale sono contenuti più nobili fatti di cavalleria. Venezia, 1558.

Les Devises et Armes des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde qui estoient du temps du tres renommé et vertueux Artus, Roy de la Grande Bretagne. Lyons, 1590.

L'Histoire de Merlin de la Table Ronde, qui parle des merveilleuses aventures du monde, et comment Viviane l'enferma en une tour fermée de l'air, où le dit Merlin est encore de présent enfermé. 1498.

La Vie de Merlin et de ses faiz, et le compte de ses prophecies. Paris, 1528.

La Vita di Merlino, con le sue profezie. Venezia, 1539.

Le nouveau Tristan Prince de Leonnois, Chevalier de la Table Ronde, et d'Iseulte Princesse d'Irlande Reine de Cornouaille, traduit en François par Jean Mauguin, dit le petit Angevin. Paris, 1544, 1567, 1586. Lyons, 1577.

Libro del esforçado Cavalier, Don Tristan di Leones, y de sus grandes hechos en armas. Sevilla, 1528.

Dell' opere magnanime dei due Tristani, Cavalieri Invitti della Tavola Rotonda. Libri due. Venezia, 1552, 1555, (a translation from the last-mentioned Spanish work.)

Innamoramento di M. Tristano e di Madonna Isotta. (Date and place of publication unknown.)

THE END.

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